

TWENTIETH CENTURY INTERPRETATIONS  
" OF

THE BOOK  
OF JOB

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*A Collection of Critical Essays*

Edited by  
PAUL S. SANDERS  
" /

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*To Mary Jane*

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A word of reassurance may be owed the reader. To present in limited space a fairly broad spectrum of views necessitated omissions from most of the essays. I have tried diligently to be faithful to the originals. In some instances the excerpted version has been passed by the author or his agents. When it seemed important to do so, I have summarized omissions in footnotes. For the rest, the deletions, usually quite brief, were deemed not to affect the substance or progress of the author's argument.

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TWENTIETH CENTURY INTERPRETATIONS  
OF  
THE BOOK OF JOB

# Introduction\*

by Paul S. Sanders

For Western man Job has been the preeminent symbol of innocent suffering. His story interests both scholar and common reader, man of faith and skeptic; no one seriously concerned to understand man's condition can ignore it. Doubtless it offers something to every explorer; but, like every great work of literature, Job yields its peculiar treasures only on its own terms. It demands the cultivation of a special area of knowledge and an appreciation of a sensibility perhaps no longer easily accessible. The serious reader, whatever his own predilections, will want first of all to hear the work itself. Whether he finds in it an answer to the dark mystery will partly depend on how he frames his questions.

Existence presents us the raw data of the problem: the inequities of life, its swift and inevitable end, and a contrary sense that it all ought to count for something; but there are many ways of dealing with the issues. Job's way is its own: not Greek, but Semitic; not merely Near Eastern, but Hebraic; not analytical, but expectantly religious. Its tone, though fully as anguished and urgent as that of tragedy, is yet more confident. Like Jacob at Peniel (Gen. 32:24-32), Job would not wrestle so passionately did he not, paradoxically, expect a blessing. The unknown God must be also the God one has partly known in the past and trusts for the future. Job is no Hebrew Prometheus. Far less is he a model of either strenuous self-assertion or pessimistic abnegation. The mood of the book is entirely removed from the modern temper. Its questioning is not Romantic agony, its solution neither cosmic Satanism nor panentheism; and there is nothing at all in it of the cultural nihilism and alienated solipsism—the atheism—of a world called absurd.

## *Reading the Bible*

A generation ago college courses in "The English Bible as Literature" were much in vogue. Their technique appears frequently to have

\* A few expressions here have been taken from my essay, "The Passion of Job," Masterpieces of Western Literature (Dubuque, 1966), I, 135-46. Copyright © 1966 by Alex Page and Leon Barron. Used by permission.

been false to both literature and theology: to skim off and savor the finer passages while avoiding the thicker (and more controversial) religious substance. The Bible, of course, *is* literature, though not all of it great; but even its finest writings owe little in the first instance to esthetic motives. In any case, one cannot appreciate the Bible *as* literature without listening to it. One may not accept the thought of Plato, or Aquinas, or Sartre, but one cannot even understand their works without attending to their concerns. One cannot read Milton well without knowing Puritan theology, or Pascal without some knowledge of Jansenism, or contemporary poetry without acquaintance with contemporary life. Precisely because form cannot finally be separated from content, one has to attend to both, even if the latter is not to be paraphrased into a set of summary propositions.

The Authorized (King James) Version may be, as John Livingston Lowes remarked, "the noblest monument of English prose," but it also is a monument to seventeenth (and sixteenth) century English thought and sensibility. The Bible exists nevertheless in its own massive integrity. No adequate attempt at reading in it for pleasure and profit can forgo studying the history, religious thought and practices, and literary genres of the world in which it arose. Such effort is nowadays especially necessary to overcome in this area general ignorance of sound interpretive principles—an altogether different thing from unwillingness or inability to make a particular religious commitment; the latter is a personal choice, the former an intellectual scandal. It is also necessary to counteract the very charm of the Authorized Version, which may insulate the reader from realizing what he is being called upon to grapple with.

Of course one is to concentrate upon the work itself; but in the case of a literature so ancient, so varied, and so far removed in form and sensibility as is the Bible from that to which the principles of the New Criticism are readily applicable, understanding and appreciation will be possible only as a given work is set within its proper historical and literary context. This principle has been fully justified in its theological results, freeing interpretation from outworn conventions; it will be no less so in literary criticism as well.

Job belongs to the Wisdom literature of the Bible,<sup>1</sup> with Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, and, in the Apocrypha, Ben Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) and the Wisdom of Solomon, together with many Psalms. The nearest thing to philosophy the Bible can show, this literature is less speculative than practical. If some of it is merely prudential advice, at its best it canvasses the breadth and plumbs the depths of

<sup>1</sup> See O. S. Rankin, *Israel's Wisdom Literature* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936); Harry Ranston, *The Old Testament Wisdom Books and Their Teaching* (London: The Epworth Press, 1930).

human existence. Broadly humane in spirit, it ranges widely over man's place in nature and society and wrestles with the perplexities no one escapes in the quest for a satisfying existence. Throughout runs a common theme: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." The professional wise man held a recognized place in the community alongside prophet and priest (Jer. 18:18). Unlike either, he emphasized not what was peculiar to Israel but common to mankind; like both, he was certain wisdom lay in conforming one's life to the will of God. Acquaintance with Wisdom literature, in a variety of forms, enables us to place Job within a specific Biblical context and a more cosmopolitan milieu as well.

### Near Eastern Wisdom and Job

Near Eastern archaeology has shed much light on ancient Israel. The Genesis creation stories, for example, are related to the Babylonian myth *Enuma elish* and the *Gilgamesh Epic*.<sup>2</sup> Scholars are now at work upon the Northwest Semitic literature recovered by excavations at Ras Shamra (ancient Ugarit) on the Syrian coast.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the Fertile Crescent existed a Wisdom tradition that overran national, racial, and linguistic barriers. One main theme was everywhere the same: the hope of securing prosperity by pleasing the gods; but a counter-theme also appears, arising from the observed discrepancy between theory and fact. A number of Near Eastern texts bear some resemblance to Job.

Two Egyptian didactic tales have, like Job, prose narrative enfolding a central poetic section. In "A Dispute Over Suicide"<sup>4</sup> a man, apparently robbed, deserted by family and friends, and maligned, argues with his soul that he should simply kill himself: on earth there is no justice, and no god to take man's part. The soul opposes his intention, but finally, anticipating participation in the life of the gods, consents to die. In "The Protests of the Eloquent Peasant"<sup>5</sup> the central figure, cheated by a landholder, argues before the Chief Steward that justice is the will of the gods and a source of honor to man. Finally he per-

<sup>2</sup> See James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), hereafter cited as ANET; Akkadian myths and epics translated by E. A. Speiser: *Enuma elish*, pp. 60-72; *Gilgamesh Epic*, pp. 72-99.

<sup>3</sup> See A. S. Kapelrud, "Ugarit," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), IV, 724-32.

<sup>4</sup> ANET, pp. 405-7; trans. John A. Wilson. Most of the relevant texts are more fully summarized and discussed in Marvin H. Pope, *Job*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1965), 1-lxvi; and Samuel Terrien, "Job: Introduction," in *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press), III (1954), 878-84.

<sup>5</sup> ANET, pp. 407-10; trans. John A. Wilson.

suades the judge and is given the goods of his persecutor as recompense.

Closer parallels to Job are found in Mesopotamian literature. In a Sumerian poem<sup>6</sup> a once notable man, bereft of goods, friends, and health, and without any explanation for his misfortune, appeals to the deity whose duty is to intercede for him in the assembly of gods; tearfully he confesses his inherent sinfulness, and is relieved. An Akkadian poem, "A Dialogue about Human Misery,"<sup>7</sup> reflects the same pessimism. A sufferer pours out his grief and doubt; a friend rebuts each complaint, calling upon the sufferer to seek peace with the gods by confessing his sin. There is no development and no resolution.

Another Akkadian poem, "I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom,"<sup>8</sup> depicts a pious man afflicted with disease and terrifying nightmares, failing in his efforts to please the gods. Miserably he anticipates the division of his property and the laughter of his enemies at his death. But, as he learns in dreams, three friends intercede for him, and the god Marduk lifts his affliction. The poem is a monologue, largely a hymn of thanksgiving. A third Akkadian poem, "A Pessimistic Dialogue between Master and Servant,"<sup>9</sup> illustrates with witty cynicism the doubt about life's meaning common to all these pieces. One after another the master proposes some action, and the slave praises it; the master then proposes its opposite, and the slave is equally enthusiastic. Virtually every human desire or value is thus exhausted.

"The Legend of King Keret"<sup>10</sup> is an incompletely recovered epic from Ugarit. The king loses his whole family, but after sacrificing to the god El wins a new wife in warfare and is blessed with a new family. He falls ill; his fields lose their fertility because the rains have been withheld. A son wonders how Keret can be "El's son" when such things occur; another rebels against his father, but is cursed in the name of the gods. The intent of the poem is no longer clear, but there is some similarity in theme to Job.

These works date from the third millennium B.C. to the first. We do not know how widely any one of them was known, but it is probable that the author of Job was conversant with such literature. The story of Job is laid in the land of Uz (Edom, southeast of the Dead Sea), which had its own Wisdom tradition. The hero is a patriarchal figure who might be any desert sheik. In the Prologue, theophany, and Epi-

<sup>6</sup> Text and discussion in Samuel Noah Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, 2nd ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1961), pp. 167-71.

<sup>7</sup> ANET, pp. 438-40; trans. Robert H. Pfeiffer.

<sup>8</sup> ANET, pp. 434-37; trans. Robert H. Pfeiffer.

<sup>9</sup> ANET, pp. 437f.; trans. Robert H. Pfeiffer.

<sup>10</sup> ANET, pp. 142-49; trans. H. L. Ginsberg.

logue the proper name Yahweh<sup>11</sup> is used; but elsewhere, El or Eloah (generic terms), or Shaddai, "the Almighty." The Hebrew concept of the Covenant is not emphasized. Job is deliberately set within an international context.

Nevertheless it is unlikely to have depended directly upon non-Israelite sources. It has recourse neither to a doctrine of immortality nor to a fatalism about man's lot. Its high estimation of man, its unblinking acceptance of actuality, and its delicately-poised expectation of divine-human encounter are all thoroughly characteristic of the Biblical mentality. The Hebrews, as can be seen in their reworking of alien creation myths, put their own stamp upon what they borrowed from a wider culture. It is obvious that Job will be better understood within a known Hebrew context than an assumed more general one.

### *The Hebrew Context*

The Book of Proverbs, a late compilation of materials of varied date and provenance, furnishes the clearest Biblical expression of popular Near Eastern wisdom, which the texts just surveyed were mostly meant to challenge. Right and wrong behavior should bring commensurate temporal rewards and punishments. Israel's strong moral bent found such a view congenial. The great prophets could speak in similar vein, though with an emphasis peculiarly their own. They had in view the whole people, pledged to absolute fidelity to Yahweh and promised by him life, land, and sustenance. If now Israel was threatened with destruction, it must be that Israel was unfaithful—and evidence was not hard to find; but they rested their case upon God's Covenant-faithfulness, not a baldly calculable formula.

The Covenant made by Yahweh with Israel at Mt. Sinai after the exodus from Egypt was the focus of her faith and life,<sup>12</sup> though no one understanding of it ever emerged to dominate or supplant all others. A

<sup>11</sup> Written with the Hebrew consonants transliterated YHWH (or JHVH), the holy name was in post-exilic times considered too sacred to pronounce; one substituted the word *adonai*, "lord." Eventually, as a reminder, the vowels of the substitute word were indicated in the text. *Jehovah* results from writing those vowels into the consonants of the original word—a linguistic absurdity. Since, however, the original vowels were lost when the word was no longer spoken, the present form *Yahweh* must remain conjectural, though it has won almost universal acceptance among scholars. The name appears to derive from a root meaning "to be," or, perhaps better, "to cause to be." Many translations simply read "Lord" whenever the name appears. "God" is a translation of the generic word *El* or (plural) *Elohim*.

<sup>12</sup> See Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), pp. 55-65.

seventh-century "law of Moses" (Deuteronomy) could exhibit deeply moral insight and at the same time, by attaching "blessings" and "curses" to specific actions, encourage a simplistic legalism. During the death-throes of the nation even the prophets were impelled to take account of the individualism of the more popular tradition. "In those days they shall no longer say: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' But every one shall die for his own sin; each man who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge" (Jer. 31:29f., RSV; cf. Ezek. 18:2-4).

The conquest of Israel by Nebuchadnezzar, the destruction of Jerusalem in 586, and the deportation of sizeable numbers of the population seemed a sorry end to nearly 700 years of history. These shattering events forced a rethinking of the Covenant and raised the question of theodicy in a sharp way. What had been the purpose of God's election of Israel? Was Israel worse than her captors? Are the righteous destroyed along with the wicked? Has Yahweh gone back on his promises? Is he powerless to save?<sup>13</sup>

During the Babylonian Exile a priestly group, awed by the divine transcendence, codified anew the "law of Moses," stressing rituals of purification as well as ethical principles. Another group edited Israel's national traditions, applying a rough-and-ready theory of retribution: when Israel was faithful, Yahweh prospered her cause; when unfaithful, he punished her. Covenant-promise and Covenant-demand could always be taken *quid pro quo*; and one popular strand of Hebrew thought would perpetuate what is called, not altogether justly, the Deuteronomic theory. It is that voiced by Job's friends.

The most magnificently moving voice in the Exile was that of an unknown prophet generally called Second Isaiah.<sup>14</sup> Of God's ability to work his will there can be no doubt; all that is done is done by him, the "Creator of the ends of the earth," before whom the nations are as nothing and beside whom there is no other. His faithfulness is no less sure; Israel has suffered "double for all her sins," and as she was redeemed from slavery in Egypt, will be restored from exile. Babylon is

<sup>13</sup> These questions were not wholly new. Ancient legend showed Abraham challenging God when he threatened the entire destruction of Sodom. Isaiah had evolved a concept of a Righteous Remnant who should be preserved from the ruin threatened by Assyria in his time, not only to safeguard moral distinctions but the fidelity of Yahweh as well. When in 612 Assyria, Israel's overlord, was conquered by Babylonia, but Israel's lot remained unchanged, Habakkuk had asked why Yahweh, who controls all nations, should think such a result just.

<sup>14</sup> His work had no widespread influence; but evidently disciples, unwilling to lose so profoundly beautiful an expression of Israel's being, attached the poems to a growing corpus forming around the authentic oracles of Isaiah of Jerusalem. His work is found in Isaiah 40-55 (or, with some scholars, 40-66); hence the pseudonym "Second Isaiah."

idolatrous; not knowing Yahweh, she worships false gods, and will be brought to judgment. In all that happens Yahweh reveals himself the Lord of history. All peoples are his; and Israel is his witness, "a light to the Gentiles" (49:6), his suffering servant making vicarious atonement for all mankind (52:13-53:12).

The overthrow of Babylon by Cyrus of Persia in 539 made possible a return. The heights reached by Second Isaiah were difficult to sustain. Israel concentrated instead upon trying to perform every moral and ritual prescription of the Law, or Torah ("instruction"). Three streams flowed into the making of post-exilic Judaism: prophetic concern that Israel fulfill her Covenant role; priestly concern for holiness, the reflection in man's life of the awful purity of God; and the sages' concern for everyday godliness as the best way of life.

This process is reflected in the compilation of the sacred scriptures. Older traditions—each a combination of myth, patriarchal saga, Covenant-history, and law, compiled at different dates and reflecting different stages of Israel's understanding—were worked together into the Pentateuch.<sup>15</sup> Alongside this platform document were grouped the "Former Prophets" (the Deuteronomic recension of Israel's history from her entrance into Canaan to the Exile; now Joshua through Kings) and the "Latter Prophets" (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and The Twelve: smaller books, including among others the by no means minor prophets Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Habakkuk). With the subsequent compilation of the Psalms, the gathering of the Wisdom writings, and the addition of a few late pseudo-historical pieces, all lumped under the miscellaneous heading "Writings," the process would be complete.

From one end to the other of this canon runs a single tripartite theme: one God, Maker of heaven and earth, holy and just, King of Israel, Father of men, and Lord of all; man, made in God's image, yet fallen through disobedience, of whom is required conformity with God's revealed will, and to whom is offered God's awful, but comforting presence; and Israel, the elect people, no nation among the nations

<sup>15</sup> The oldest tradition, referred to as J, was compiled ca. 950. Introduced by the second creation story, it incorporates chiefly Southern cultic and historical data within a grandly universal scheme. R. H. Pfeiffer has called the Jahvist materials the Hebrew *Iliad*. The Northern tradition, Elohist, or E, compiled ca. 750, begins with Abraham and emphasizes the Joseph clans. It is somewhat more subtle theologically than J, though narrower in outlook. After the fall of the Northern Kingdom to Assyria in 722, these two sources were probably woven together. During and after the Exile a third body of tradition, called P—some of it as ancient as anything in J or E, and positively monotheistic, and priestly and legalistic in emphasis—incorporated JE within its own framework. Eventually Deuteronomy was attracted into this constellation. By perhaps 400 the whole "Law of Moses" was complete. The division into books occurred later. Consult an Introduction to the Old Testament for further information.

but God's servant, yet called, in the strangeness of Providence, to historical fulfillment. What Yahweh will do will be done in the flesh, however much the actuality of life may fail to exhaust the fullness of his glory. Where in this richly variegated yet basically consistent theology of history is Job to be placed?

### *The Book of Job*

Knowing more now than formerly about ancient ways of composition, we may view the Book of Job as a whole which has reached its present form through a process of organic growth.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless it is useful to distinguish its components and, as far as possible, their separate histories.

The prose Prologue (1-2) and Epilogue (42:7-17) are usually considered<sup>17</sup> the remains of a folk tale, in which apparently Job maintained his patience under testing and was rewarded. According to most critics, a later poet replaced its central portion by his own work, in which Job's friends are made to defend orthodox Wisdom and Job to question it. Some discrepancies are evident.<sup>18</sup> A few critics, nevertheless, attribute the prose to the poet himself. Others think that the poem existed independently and that the prose sections were added by a later hand.<sup>19</sup> Despite a difference in tone, there are linguistic affinities between the prose and the dialogue. The most convincing view will probably be that the poet, while unwilling to rework the familiar tale completely, modified it to suit his own purposes.

The poem begins with Job's lament (3), on which the influence of

<sup>16</sup> Terrien, *Interpreter's Bible*, III, 884a; Robert Gordis, *The Book of God and Man* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 106 and note 7. The tendency of nineteenth-century classical and Biblical scholarship to shred works into ever finer fragments has been substantially reversed.

<sup>17</sup> Robert H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, rev. ed. (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1948), pp. 667-75. This work surveys various opinions on the critical problems.

<sup>18</sup> In the Prologue Job seems a desert sheik, but in chapter 29 a city dweller. In the poem Job shows little concern for cultic rites, which loom larger in both prose sections. Not only does the Satan not reappear in the Epilogue, but, more seriously, the ending seems to many to threaten the poem's meaning.

<sup>19</sup> William B. Stevenson, *The Poem of Job* (London: Oxford University Press, for the British Academy, 1947), p. 21 and Chap. IV *in toto*. The author argues for the independence of the poem. Conceding the likelihood of an earlier prose story, he finds it impossible that the poet has joined them together (pp. 85f.). But could a poet have begun bluntly with Job's lament, even assuming his readers were familiar with the story? It is true that the poem makes no reference to the events in the Heavenly Court, but Job and his friends could not know of those. The reader does, and considers that explanation for Job's misfortune along with all the others offered.

Jeremiah is plain (cf. *Jer. 20:14-18*). The dialogue that follows (4-27) is arranged in three cycles, structured alike.

	Cycle I	Cycle II	Cycle III
	4-14	15-21	22-27
Eliphaz	4-5	15	22
Job	6-7	16-17	23-24
Bildad	8	18	25
Job	9-10	19	26-27
Zophar	11	20	—
Job	12-14	21	—

The last cycle is now apparently disarranged. Bildad speaks only briefly, Zophar not at all; and Job in parts of his replies espouses the position he has all along rejected. Scholars attribute this situation to accidental loss or deliberate obfuscation, and propose various restorations. Terrien<sup>20</sup> adds to Bildad 26:5-14, and gives to Zophar 24:18-24 and 27:13-23. Job's reply to Zophar is still missing, but otherwise a satisfactory sequence results.

Chapter 28, though it appears a continuation of Job's speech, is an interruption. Some critics believe it integral to the poem, but more likely it was an independent piece. A hymn to the Divine Wisdom, asserting man's inability to know the secrets of God's working, it tempers the sharpness of Job's questioning and the arrogance of the friends' assumption of knowledge. Perhaps it was written by the same poet; at any rate, by whoever was responsible for the Yahweh-speeches.

Chapters 29-31 are best taken, not as a reply to the last speaker or the friends generally, but as monologue. Turning from his counselors, Job meditates on his former situation (29), his present wretchedness (30), and the evidence of his innocence (31), pushing on to a terrible "oath of clearance" at the end.

Here some scholars find the end of the original poem.<sup>21</sup> Job has challenged God magnificently; there is nothing God can answer, and no reason for him to appear. To go directly to the Epilogue is so jarring that one must think the poem in this case complete in itself. But if the Prologue is needed, the Epilogue (since they belong together) must be retained, and that is hardly possible without the intervening confrontation of Job by the Lord.

Several critics think, just the same, that the Yahweh-section (38:1-42:6) was added later, to furnish a rebuke to Job's impiety, or to fill

<sup>20</sup> Terrien, *Interpreter's Bible*, III, 888b.

<sup>21</sup> E.g., William A. Irwin, "The Wisdom Literature," *Interpreter's Bible*, I (1952), 216f. Stopping at this point lends to Job an especially Promethean character. Emil G. Kraeling, *The Book of the Ways of God* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), stops even sooner, with chapter 26.

a felt poetic *lacuna*. In the one case it must have been added by a different hand; in the second, either by a new poet or (as some say, citing Goethe's method with *Faust*) the same poet later in life. A majority retain the theophany as the main fulfillment of the poet's intention and a transition to the older prose ending.<sup>22</sup> It is not easy to say just how it is effective. Little is said that has not already been affirmed or conceded. Job is not faulted on the point of his innocence. But by underscoring the fact that Job, for all his honesty, has spoken without full knowledge and by spreading before us a panorama of God's creative concern, Yahweh's discourse raises the discussion to another plane. There are close connections in style and tone between the dialogue and theophany-speeches; both are of surpassing poetic excellence, and sufficiently related to justify a conclusion of common authorship.

Yahweh speaks and Job responds (38:1-40:5); he speaks again and Job replies once more (40:6-42:6). If the theophany is original, are both these sequences so? Why should Yahweh renew his challenge after Job has fallen silent? There is general agreement that the bulk of the second speech (40:15-41:34) is an interpolation or, in any event, out of place. Probably Behemoth and Leviathan (not hippopotamus and crocodile, but creation-myth figures) should be accounted secondary, even though the section extends the point about God's provident wisdom. Their language and tone are different, and the entire theophany is improved when the Lord's second speech is limited to 40:6-14.

Between Job's soliloquy and Yahweh's appearing are four speeches (32-37) by a young man Elihu, unmentioned before or after.<sup>23</sup> Some critics find in them the answer to Job, and include Elihu while excluding Yahweh. For others Elihu's monition against pride provides a bridge in thought to Yahweh's cautionary words, as his mention of thunderclouds prepares for the Voice out of the Whirlwind. Others find the speeches valuable, but secondary. Most commentators reject them altogether as an inferior interpolation. Elihu urges the disciplinary value of suffering, but Eliphaz has done so already; and his warning against presuming to understand God's ways blunts the effect of Yahweh's magnificent poetry. All he says, he says bumptiously. Without these chapters the poem goes directly from Job's daring oath to the Lord's answer, and to many that point alone is decisive.

If, to keep to the commonest opinion, one writer created the basic poem consisting of the lament, three rounds of dialogue, Job's monologue, and the confrontation between the Lord and Job, and set it

<sup>22</sup> See, e.g., R. A. F. Mackenzie, S. J., "The Purpose of the Yahweh Speeches in the Book of Job," *Biblica*, 40 (1959), 435-45.

<sup>23</sup> Gordis, *Book of God and Man*, Chap. IX, surveys various opinions about the Elihu-speeches, concluding for their authenticity; but see Pfeiffer, *Introduction*, pp. 672f.

within an older prose framework, then the Epilogue must be thought consistent with his purpose. Job's innocence has been vindicated; but he is not being rewarded—that notion has been completely overturned. That the Lord is making up to Job what he has suffered is an unnecessary and, indeed, wrong inference. What is *said* is that "the Lord changed the fortune of Job when he prayed for his friends" (42:10a). The crucial problem, which arose not from Job's physical misery but from what that seemed to imply about his relation with God, has been resolved. Job's relationship with the Lord has been set straight; his new health, wealth, and family are the outward and visible images of that otherwise inward and invisible state.

### *Authorship and Date*

What we have before us is a work of imaginative literature,<sup>24</sup> rooted in age-old legend, related to other Near Eastern and Israelite traditions, and modified by subsequent expansion and interpretation. As to the identity of its author, we have not the least clue; nor is it possible to know exactly when it was written.<sup>25</sup> Surely no earlier than the time of Jeremiah (who flourished 626–586); not only are passages of Jeremiah reflected in its poetry, but the way the problem is set and the tone of its handling owe much to that most profoundly engaging prophet. Jeremiah was alive when Jerusalem was destroyed.

The Exile gave new poignancy to the question of human suffering and God's justice. Upon the stricken nation Second Isaiah urged a paradoxical suffering fulfillment. The Job-tradition, of course, was concerned with an individual, but in the poem Job's concern is widened to embrace all who suffer inexplicably. The plight of Job was the plight of Israel.<sup>26</sup> There are important connections between Job and

<sup>24</sup> No question of historical accuracy arises. Ezekiel 14:20 speaks of Noah, Daniel, and Job as traditional heroes of piety. Noah derives from Mesopotamian models: e.g., Utnapishtim in *Gilgamesh*. Dan(i)el is not the hero of the Biblical book, but, as we now know, of a Ugaritic epic far older than the time of Ezekiel (Pope, *Job*, xxxi). In citing Job as a model of patience, the Epistle of James (5:11) seems to know another version than our book. One early rabbinical commentator speaks of him as a symbolic figure (Babylonian Talmud *Baba Bathra* 15a). See further N. H. Glatzer, "The Book of Job and Its Interpreters," in *Biblical Motifs*, ed. Alexander Altmann [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966], pp. 197–220.

<sup>25</sup> Pfeiffer, *Introduction*, pp. 675–78.

<sup>26</sup> Ancient thought did not always distinguish between individual and corporate concepts of personality. It is never entirely clear whether the "Suffering Servant" of Second Isaiah is Israel, an elect portion, or one man. In the Synoptic Gospels the concept "Son of Man" is applied to Jesus and to the Kingdom of God of which he is head. Gilbert Murray discusses Greek tragic heroes as reflections of communal religious and civic issues (*Aeschylus: The Creator of Tragedy* [Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1940], pp. 74–80).

Second Isaiah.<sup>27</sup> Both celebrate the overwhelming majesty of God, whose ways are hid from man, who yet condescends to man's estate, revealing as he wills his purposes and strengthening by his presence those whom he upholds. Yet Job's author is less sure than the Unknown Prophet that at the heart of the mystery of suffering lies compassionate love.

The preference of perhaps most scholars for a post-exilic date for Job rests, among other things, on a supposed dependence upon Greek thought. But contact between Greek and Semitic cultures is now thought to have existed long before the Hellenization that became general only in the fourth century. The question is whether one need look for Greek influence. In a hard case Occam's razor must be used. Near Eastern literature far older than the earliest suggested date for Job furnishes examples of religious questioning, and in a more naturally appropriate idiom. Hebrew thought was in any case perfectly capable of wrestling with its deity. And there was, as we have seen, a moment in Hebrew history when precisely Job's questions were being pressed home.

After the Exile, conventional thought and conduct provided a protective shell for a much-battered people, still to be subjected to massive cultural intrusions for the next 500 years. Orthodoxy begets protest; unknown writers created three such works that found their way into the canon: Jonah and Ruth, and, in different vein, Ecclesiastes, generally also thought subject to Greek influence. A post-exilic date for Job would, however, be at the expense of more obvious ties. It is anyhow questionable whether Job is most truly characterized as protest literature. It canvasses a variety of answers to the problem of suffering, rejects one, allows others to stand, and offers none of its own—only a low-keyed hint that the presence of God obviates the need for an explanation. The insights of Second Isaiah (and of Psalm 73; but we have no way of dating that) are advances beyond Job; it is unlikely the author knew them.<sup>28</sup> A date between Jeremiah and the end of the Exile seems most probable.

From his work we can deduce something of the author. He is the most learned writer in the Bible, at ease in more languages than his own, and acquainted with the natural environment, thought, and literary resources of the vast cultural complex from Egypt to Mesopotamia. He understood the science of his day, though imposing too nar-

<sup>27</sup> Terrien, *Interpreter's Bible*, III, 889–890a. Both A. S. Peake (*Job*, The Century Bible [Edinburgh: T. C. & E. C. Jack, 1905], pp. 38–40) and Gordis (*Book of God and Man*, pp. 214–16) argue that Job, though related to Second Isaiah, is later.

<sup>28</sup> So Terrien, p. 889; cf. Pfeiffer, p. 677. See also Martin Buber, *The Prophetic Faith*, Torchbooks Edition (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1960), Chap. 8.

row limitations upon it. He had closely observed animals and growing things; he knew the constellations, and was aware of the attraction of planet-worship in alien faiths; he had perhaps experienced natural cataclysms. Sensitive to man's changing moods, he had observed human behavior closely and pondered deeply its motivations, struck most of all perhaps by the complexity of man's heart. Once in his stride he no longer writes about Job, in the role of "omniscient observer," but pours out in exalted lyric verse what he himself has handled of the truth of life.<sup>29</sup> Though it has been questioned, surely he was a Hebrew.<sup>30</sup> True, he sits loose to Covenant, Land, Temple, and Torah (which are nevertheless not all of them out of his sight). But he is quintessentially Hebraic in his special blend of irony:<sup>31</sup> his demand for a "friendly God" (Luther's phrase; but cf. Jesus's Parable of the Impotent Widow), and his willingness, like Abraham's, to walk without knowing whither, but only the One who leads.

### *Its Literary Characteristics*

The Hebrew text of Job has come down in worse disrepair than is normal; there appears to have been deliberate tampering. There are numerous Aramaisms.<sup>32</sup> Where not evidently corrupt the text is not infrequently obscure. Many words occur nowhere else in the Bible, or rarely. Help must be sought in other Semitic languages, and from other ancient versions (e.g., the Greek Septuagint, dating from around the second century B.C.). Although textual criticism is a matter for experts, no translation can be sounder than the underlying text, and even the ordinary reader should be aware of the problem.

Difficulties arise from the very skill of the poet.<sup>33</sup> He uses foreign synonyms to vary the parallelism. There is word play in which the effect derives from the similarity in sound of two different words; it is totally untranslatable. In another type two quite distinct meanings of

<sup>29</sup> See, among others, Duncan B. Macdonald, *The Hebrew Literary Genius* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1933), Chap. III.

<sup>30</sup> Gordis, *Book of God and Man*, Chap. XV, argues for a Hebrew provenance. Pfeiffer, *Introduction*, pp. 678-83, disagrees.

<sup>31</sup> Edwin M. Good, *Irony in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965), Chap. VII. The entire book is valuable.

<sup>32</sup> Aramaic was the language of Semitic peoples living in northwest Mesopotamia and Syria. It became the *lingua franca* of the Near East, even replacing spoken Hebrew. It appears elsewhere in the Bible, not always in works considered late. The ease and frequency of its use in Job says something about Job's date, but the question is not easily resolved. See Pope, *Job*, xlii-xlv; Gordis, *Book of God and Man*, pp. 160-63.

<sup>33</sup> Pfeiffer, *Introduction*, pp. 683-92, offers a good discussion.

the same word or a homonym are subtly played against each other. The difficulty of conveying this in translation may be seen in the familiar couplet:

My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle,  
and come to their end without hope (7:6, RSV).

As Gordis points out, the word here used for *hope* is identical with a word for *thread*; the figure thus conveys not only swiftness, but an undertone of running out of thread.<sup>34</sup>

Another frequent device, depending for its effect upon association of ideas, is the use of quotations to give density of texture.<sup>35</sup> The quotations, as Gordis shows, may be of many sorts: a common saying, or lines from an earlier speech of the present speaker, or of someone else; and they are used with a variety of effect. Since there are no quotation marks, the practice not only usually goes unnoticed, but may lead the reader to suppose that lines are misplaced. A notable example may be seen in the Revised Standard Version translation of Job's final speech (42:1-6), where twice Job picks up phrases from Yahweh; the tone of Job's submission is thus rendered gently ironic, providing an important clue for its interpretation. The poem is full of metaphors, similes, and images, all especially important in Hebrew literature, since the language lacks abstract words or a large vocabulary. Much of the book's effect derives from allusion and analogy, as is true of all poetry and particularly Hebrew Wisdom literature.<sup>36</sup> Job is the work of a highly intelligent, deeply sensitive, and skillfull master of his craft.

It is impossible to assign Job to a particular genre. The prose belongs to folklore, but is occasionally now quite sophisticated, and must anyhow be taken with the poetry. Plato's Dialogues will not serve as analogue; his tone of rational inquiry expressed in conversational prose is quite unlike the passionate tone, yet formalized structure of Job's poetry. There are similarities to Greek tragedy; but even if one grants that Job is tragic in spirit—a debatable point, it is hardly drama.<sup>37</sup> Nor is the frequent comparison with *Faust* helpful, though

<sup>34</sup> Gordis, *Book of God and Man*, p. 168; see notes 48-51, and the whole of Chap. XII.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, Chap. XIII. See also Stevenson, *The Poem of Job*, pp. 65f. and Appendix V, B.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, Chap. XIV, especially pp. 199-202. The word translated "proverb" (*ma-shal*) literally denotes comparison. It is used also to mean fable, allegory, and parable, and is related to parallelism. The point of the Yahweh-speeches Gordis finds in an analogy between the natural and the moral orders; see Chap. X, esp. pp. 132-34. On figures of speech see Stevenson, *The Poem of Job*, pp. 66-71.

<sup>37</sup> Horace M. Kallen, *The Book of Job as a Greek Tragedy* (New York: Moffatt, Yard and Co., 1918; Hill and Wang, 1959), argues for Euripidean influence upon both the spirit and form of Job and attempts to restore it as a tragic drama, complete with prologue, *agon*, messenger, choruses, epiphany, and epilogue.

apparently Goethe with his "Prologue in Heaven" wished to point a connection. Much of Job's poetry is finely lyrical, but not the entire work. It has been called an "epic of the inner life,"<sup>38</sup> an accommodation of the lyric to the epic mode; but Job is far removed from the tone or style of an *Odyssey*, though perhaps nearer to the *Divine Comedy*. On the level of thought and feeling Job's experiences may be the journey or battle of the epic hero, but the form does not qualify. To call it didactic partly indicates its purpose—though, unlike *Paradise Lost*, that may be less to propose a theodicy than an anthropodicy.<sup>39</sup> Nor is it reflective in the way of Ecclesiastes (or Montaigne, or Pascal). It is, as Peake says, simply itself.

The study of Hebrew prosody is far from settled, but awareness of such principles as are clear enhances appreciation of the poetry even in translation.<sup>40</sup> A verse (not necessarily the same as the conventionally numbered "verse" of our translations) has two, or sometimes three, intimately related members. It is always end-stopped. Within the verse a pause (caesura), usually quite distinct, separates the members. The members are balanced both in form and thought, but the significant meaning is more basic to the characteristic principle of parallelism.

The usually distinguished types of parallelism are three: *synonymous* (the same idea repeated in similar language); *antithetic* (the same idea stated in opposite or contrasting ways); and *synthetic* (one idea continued and completed). The last is often merely formally evident in the balanced rhythm. The inventiveness of the poets produced skillful variations, among which some scholars recognize further distinct types. In *emblematic* parallelism simile or metaphor balances a more literal phrase. In *ascending* parallelism, usually between two verses, the second, by incorporating a partially new thought while recapitulating the original, pushes on to fuller meaning. It is a sort of cross between synonymous and synthetic parallelism; the types are not always strictly differentiable. *Chiastic* parallelism balances the first member of one verse with the second of another, and the second member of the first verse with the beginning member of the other.

<sup>38</sup> John F. Genung, *The Epic of the Inner Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1891). Milton called Job a "brief epic," and *Paradise Regained* was apparently thought to belong to that genre. See Barbara K. Lewalski, *Milton's Brief Epic: The Genre, Meaning, and Art of Paradise Regained* (Providence: Brown University Press; London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1966).

<sup>39</sup> Good, *Irony*, Chap. VII, esp. p. 240.

<sup>40</sup> See Alex R. Gordon, *The Poets of the Old Testament* (New York and London: Hodder & Stoughton, Ltd., 1912), Chap. I; Norman K. Gottwald, "Poetry, Hebrew," in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, III, 829-38; Theodore H. Robinson, *The Poetry of the Old Testament* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1947), Chaps. I and II; George Adam Smith, *The Early Poetry of Israel* (London: Oxford University Press, for the British Academy, 1927), Sec. I.

## SYNONYMOUS

Does the wild ass bray when he has grain,  
or the ox low over his fodder? (Job 6:5, RSV.)

Two members of three thought-units each repeat one idea in similar words. The parallelism is complete. The rhythm is indicated 3:3.

He is thrust from light into darkness,  
and driven out of the world (18:18, RSV).

“From-light” and “into-darkness,” two thought-units, are balanced by one: “out-of-the-world.” The parallelism is incomplete; the accentual pattern is 3:2.

## ANTITHETIC

Behold, he put no trust in his servants,  
and his angels he charged with folly (4:18, AV).

The thought is expressed first negatively, then positively. Nothing balances “behold.” “Put-no-trust-in” is balanced by two units: “charged-with” and “folly.” Thus compensated, the rhythm remains 3:3.

Let the day perish wherein I was born,  
and the night which said, “A man-child is conceived” (3:3, RSV).

The stress pattern is 4:4, the parallelism incomplete but compensated. There is contrast; but, since both day of birth and night of conception are cursed, this is probably better taken as synonymous parallelism.

## SYNTHEtic

He who withholds kindness from a friend  
forsakes the fear of the Almighty (6:14, RSV).

The parallelism is here purely formal—almost none at all.

Behold, happy *is* the man whom God correcteth:  
therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty (5:17, AV).

The second member continues and clinches the thought of the first. The rhythm is 4:4. “Behold,” as such words often do, here stands outside the stress pattern. “Thou” merely helps translate the imperative. (Note: AV italicizes words added for English sense, behind which lies no Hebrew equivalent. Obviously no emphasis is intended.)

## VARIATIONS

Yet his food is turned in his stomach;  
it is the gall of asps within him (20:14, RSV).

Metaphor balances literal statement, giving emblematic parallelism.

For he wounds, but he binds up;  
he smites, but his hands heal (5:18, RSV).

The synonymous parallelism has in addition an antithesis repeated on each side of the pause.

But man dies, and is laid low;  
man breathes his last, and where is he? (14:10, RSV).

An example of ascending parallelism: the thought of dying is recapitulated, but with an additional twist at the end.

Who provides for the raven its prey,  
when its young ones cry to God,  
and wander about for lack of food? (38:41, RSV).

This 3:3:3 verse exhibits synonymous (synthetic?) parallelism between the second and third members, which together are related synthetically to the first.

My spirit is broken, my days are extinct,  
the grave is ready for me (17:1, RSV).

The six-beat verse is divided 2:2:2. The three members say nearly the same thing; yet there is a sense of continuation which does not, however, actually climb. The parallelism is hard to classify, though probably synthetic.

## EXTERNAL PARALLELISM

The reader, having distinguished the internal parallelism of separate verses, should begin to attend to larger combinations.

Behold, you have instructed many,  
and you have strengthened the weak hands.  
Your words have upheld him who was stumbling,  
and you have made firm the feeble knees (4:3-4, RSV).

Here "behold" must be counted, not taken as an anacrusis, giving a regular 3:3 rhythm. The parallelism of vs. 3 is probably synthetic; *with the result that* is implied. Vs. 4 is internally synonymous, incom-

plete but compensated; "words" is not balanced, and "him-who-was-stumbling" is balanced by two distinct words. The whole of vs. 4 is related to the second member of vs. 3, balancing the thought of hands and knees. "Words" echoes "instructed." All three latter members flesh out the meaning of the first member of vs. 3. Externally the parallelism is probably to be considered ascending.

Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades,  
or loose the cords of Orion?  
Can you lead forth the Mazzaroth in their season,  
or can you guide the Bear with its children?  
Do you know the ordinances of the heavens?  
Can you establish their rule on the earth? (38:31-33, RSV).

Here are three 3 : 3 verses. The first is internally synonymous, with an undertone of antithesis. The second is synonymous, incomplete with compensation. The third has an uncommon full stop at the pause; the second member is closely related to the first, but goes quite beyond it. Between vss. 31 and 32 the parallelism is externally synonymous. Between these two taken together and vs. 33 there is ascending parallelism: to be able to do these things would mean that one not only knows the laws of the constellations but ordained them as well. "On the earth" meanwhile subtly places Job as against Yahweh.

Behold, God will not reject a blameless man,  
nor take the hand of evil doers.  
He will yet fill your mouth with laughter,  
and your lips with shouting.  
Those who hate you will be clothed with shame,  
and the tent of the wicked will be no more (8:20-22, RSV).

An intricate pattern: vs. 21 is related in thought to vs. 20a, and vs. 22 to vs. 20b; the external contrast between the latter two verses expands the internal contrast of vs. 20.

Analysis of even longer sections reveals amazing virtuosity; but the interrelation of verses leads into the complicated question of strophic structure, discussed in Kissane's essay below. The same essay discusses Hebrew metrics, a matter naturally clearer when reference can be had to the original language, and not entirely understood even by scholars. The basic principle is, however, clear. Hebrew meter is not quantitative, as in Greek and Latin, but accentual. Scansion on the basis of regularly recurring long and short syllables is alien to the language. Nearer analogies are the accentual rhythm of early English poetry or the "sprung rhythm" of Gerard Manley Hopkins.

Hebrew is not well-furnished with adjectives, adverbs, and "cement words." Normal stress falls upon nouns and verbs, which include

within their formation or attract under their accent pronominal subjects and verbal auxiliaries as well as pronominal and frequently other modifiers. All these are in English separate words, but for purposes of sense-rhythm it is normal to disregard most of them; once the major accents are felt, any number of unaccented words or syllables can usually ride along, and, conversely, no awkwardness results from two strong accents alongside. English appears to have a singular aptness for translating Hebrew. The reader should look for the constituent thought-units and their balancing, and let that lead him to the accentuation. The more or less regular accentual patterns depend upon the balance of word-masses.<sup>41</sup> With practice a reader ignorant of Hebrew can derive from a good translation a surprisingly good sense of the balance, both of thought and rhythm, of the original.

Job is printed in the Authorized Version as prose throughout, but attention to the principle of parallelism will help make good the defect. From time to time, despite a justly-praised literary quality in the whole, individual passages seem not altogether clear, and occasionally altogether unclear. Recent translations benefit from developments in linguistic studies and a fuller knowledge of the Biblical world, including its literary genres and styles. Some of Job's textual problems are doubtless insoluble; but comparative reading in various translations and spot-checking difficult passages will frequently yield helpful insights.

The essays that follow are largely expositions of Job's meaning, offering a number of approaches to the author's method, purpose, or accomplishment. So provocative a work naturally has elicited a wide variety of responses, of which the present collection should afford a useful, though restricted, sampling. Nothing, of course, can replace a personal engagement with the work itself. The Book of Job, indeed, points the way, considering various viewpoints but settling for nothing less than first-hand knowledge. Its message is an "existentialist" one: man must fearlessly encounter what is; truth must be taken into oneself; a person must, as Tillich says, become who he is. Whoever attunes his being to the pulses beating through any honestly-grasped experience, and through every great work of literature, moves significantly in that direction.

<sup>41</sup> Gottwald, *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, III, 834f.

## PART ONE

### *Interpretations*

# The Book of Job

by *Richard B. Sewall*

We look at a work of literature and call it "optimistic" or "pessimistic" or "epic" or "tragic." The book is there before us, and we find the term to describe it. But the work comes first. It is not right to say that without the vision of life embodied in the Old Testament, and notably in *The Book of Job*, the term "tragedy" would have no substance, for the Greeks invented the term and gave it a great deal of substance. But knowing what we do now about the full depth and reach of tragedy, we can see with striking clarity in the writings of the ancient Hebrews the vision which we now call tragic and in *The Book of Job* the basic elements of the tragic form. The cultural situation, the matrix out of which *Job* came, is the very definition of "the tragic moment" in history, a period when traditional values begin to lose their power to comfort and sustain, and man finds himself once more groping in the dark. The unknown Poet's "action," his redoing of the orthodox and optimistic folktale of the pious and rewarded Job, is (as we can say now) a classic example of the dynamics of tragedy, of vision creating form. And the great figure of his creation, the suffering, questioning, and unanswered Job, is the towering tragic figure of antiquity. More than Prometheus or Oedipus, Job is the universal symbol for the western imagination of the mystery of undeserved suffering.

Of all ancient peoples, the Hebrews were most surely possessed of the tragic sense of life. It pervades their ancient writings to an extent not true of the Greeks. "Judaism," writes Paul Weiss, "is Moses in the wilderness straining to reach a land he knows he never can. For the Christian this truth is but the necessary first act of a Divine Comedy. The history of the universe for the Christian is in principle already told. For the Jew history is in the making. It has peaks and valleys,

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"*The Book of Job*" by Richard B. Sewall. Chapter 2 of *The Vision of Tragedy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), pp. 9-24. Copyright © 1959 by Yale University Press. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

goods and bads, inseparably together and forever." <sup>1</sup> The Hebraic answer to the question of existence was never unambiguous or utopian; the double vision of tragedy—the snake in the garden, the paradox of man born in the image of God and yet recalcitrant, tending to go wrong—permeates the Scriptures. No case is ever clear-cut, no hero or prophet entirely faultless. The Hebrews were the least sentimental and romantic of peoples. The Old Testament stories are heavy with irony, often of the most sardonic kind. And yet their hard, acrid realism appears against a background of belief that is the substance of the most exalted and affirmative religion, compared to which the religions of their sister civilizations, Egyptian, Babylonian, and even Greek, presented a conception of the universe and man both terrible and mean.<sup>2</sup> The Hebraic view of God, man, and nature, wrought through the centuries out of hard experience and exalted vision, presented to the Poet of Job a rich and full-nerved tradition, containing all the alternatives, for evil as well as good, but founded on the belief in a just and benevolent Creator, in man as made in His image, and in an ordered universe.

Throughout their history as it is unfolded in the Old Testament, the Hebrews showed a strong critical sense, a tendency to test all their beliefs, even Jehovah Himself, against their individual experience and sense of values. This skepticism is at the root of much of their irony, and it implies, of course, a very high estimate of individual man. They had a sufficient confidence in their own native and immediate insights to set themselves, if need be, against their God. This was an affirmation about man, the Deity, and the relationship between the two, which the Babylonians and Egyptians surely never achieved, nor, as a people, did the Greeks. The Hebrews saw man not only as free and rational but free, rational, and righteous even before God. The eating of the apple was in a sense an act of the free critical intelligence.<sup>3</sup> Why should there have been even one prohibition, arbitrary and unexplained? The failure in actual experience of the orthodox teaching that God would reward the righteous and punish the wicked gave rise in later times to a whole literature of dissent, ranging from the disturbed and melancholy psalms, the ambiguous attitude toward the Deity in stories like Jonah,

<sup>1</sup> Paul Weiss, "The True, the Good, and the Jew," *Commentary* (Oct. 1946), p. 315.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the realistic and skeptical aspects of the Hebraic temper, see Duncan B. MacDonald, *The Hebrew Philosophical Genius*, Princeton, 1936. A comparative study of Hebrew, Egyptian, and Babylonian world-views, emphasizing the distinctions I am asserting here, is in *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, Chicago, 1946, by H. and H. A. Frankfort, John A. Wilson, Thorkild Jacobsen, and William A. Irwin.

<sup>3</sup> Le Comte de Noüy once remarked that in the Fall of Man was the first creative expression of the tragic idea.

to the complaints of Ecclesiastes and the full-scale protests of Job. It is hard to see why Simone Weil said of the Hebrews that they "believed themselves exempt from the misery that is the common human lot" and that only in parts of *Job* is "misfortune fairly portrayed."<sup>4</sup> Their belief in Jehovah and their hope for a Messiah served rather to intensify their sense of present inequity and to increase the anxiety which permeates this protest-literature.

But another aspect of the Hebraic tragic vision gives it its peculiar depth and poignancy, and it is the very clue to *Job*. It comes from the conception of Jehovah as a person, to be communed with, worshiped, feared, but above all to be loved. In the transactions of the Greeks with their gods, no great amount of love was lost. There was no doctrine of Creation, nor a Creator to be praised (as in psalm after psalm) for his loving-kindness and tender mercies. The Greek gods were fallible, imperfect, finite, and, above all, laws unto themselves; to rebel against them might be disastrous but it involved no inevitable spiritual dilemma or clash of loyalties. But Jehovah, in the eyes of the orthodox Hebrew, was righteous, just, and loving—and a being to whom one could appeal in the name of all these virtues. The protest embodied in *The Book of Job* came not from fear or hate but from love. Job's disillusionment was deeply personal, as from a cosmic breach of faith. However critical of the Deity, Job spoke not in arrogance and revolt but in love, and in this at least he was the true representative of an ancient piety.

The unknown Poet of Job, however, saw the old story of Job not as illustrating the ancient piety—that is, a good man blessing the Lord even in his afflictions and being rewarded for his constancy—but as throwing it into grievous question. All the latent doubts and questionings of his race came to a head. Job had trusted in The Covenant and followed The Code; God had watched over him; God's lamp had lighted his way through the darkness, His friendship had been upon his tent. Job was the beloved patriarch of a large family and a man of consequence in the community. And then, suddenly and unaccountably, the face of the universe changed. It was not only that he suffered misfortunes, lost his property, family, position, and health. Mortal man must face losses; the proverbial wisdom of the Hebrews had taught for generations that man was born for trouble, as the sparks fly upward. The shock of the story for the Poet did not lie there, if we may judge by how he retold it. The succession of catastrophes that befell Job, as the folk story recounts them, was systematic, the result of a wager between God and Satan to test Job. Job, who could know nothing of the wager, suffered at the hands of a God whom to worship and to love

<sup>4</sup> Simone Weil, "The Iliad or, The Poem of Force," 1940-41, tr. Mary McCarthy, *Politics*, Nov., 1945.

had been his daily blessing and who had turned suddenly hateful and malign. There was no mortal cause for his sufferings, nothing in his past to account for these repeated, calculated blows. If he had sinned, he had not sinned that much.

From the depth of an ancient skepticism and a sense of justice which dared to hold Deity itself to account, the Poet saw the story, as we would say, in the light of the tragic vision. The primitive terror loomed close. The resolution of the folk story, by which Job for his piety and suffering was rewarded by twice his former possessions and a new family, was unacceptable. The Poet saw Job's suffering as a thrust of destiny that raised the deepest issues, not to be accounted for by a heavenly wager and bought off by a handsome recompense. The suffering had been real; it could not be taken back; and it had not been deserved.

What to do about it? One can imagine in earlier times the primitive response of propitiation or lament, the wailing at the wall, the sharing of communal grief over inexplicable suffering. In later times, psalmists caught the mood in the most beautiful of melancholy and anguished lyrics; rabbis taught men to regard such suffering as punishment for secret sin or as God's way of testing man's loyalty. So Eliphaz (5:17) interpreted Job's suffering: "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty."<sup>5</sup> Again, none of the ancient Hebrew writers responded to the fact of undeserved suffering more sensitively than Ecclesiastes or was truer to the realities of human misery: "The truest of all men was the Man of Sorrows," wrote Melville, "and the truest of all books is Solomon's, and Ecclesiastes is the fine hammered steel of woe."<sup>6</sup> But it was not for Ecclesiastes to discover the full possibilities of the "boundary-situation," to hammer from the hard steel of woe the full dimensions of the tragic form. He observed, and contemplated, and recorded movingly what he saw. But he stopped, half-way, with pathos—the single-voiced lament, the lyric expression of a reserved and passive acceptance.

The Poet of Job chose still another way, and with him tragic vision is fulfilled in tragic form. His response was dynamic and positive. He saw in Job's story the possibilities of a significant action, not only the lamentable blows that fell upon Job but the counterthrust that makes drama. He imagined Job as striking back in the only possible way when the adversary is Destiny—that is, with words. The Poet did not deal in plotted physical action, as in a Greek play; rather, he conceived of ideas, or inner realities, functioning like actions and as fully

<sup>5</sup> Quotations are from the Authorized Version unless otherwise noted. Concerned only with *Job* as it has come down to us traditionally, I am ignoring, of course, the vexed problem of multiple authorship.

<sup>6</sup> *Moby Dick*, ch. 96 ("The Try-Works").

freighted with consequences. Although Job and his Counselors do not budge from the ash-heap (which 2:8 suggests as the setting of the drama) and do not exchange blows or even threats of blows, they are actually at death-grips. Each side sees survival at stake. The parts of the drama—character, incident, minor actions—are not clearly articulated as in plays to be performed, but the vital tension and forward movement of formal drama are clear. This method of the Poet's—sustained tension throughout the thrust-and-parry of ideas, the balancing of points of view in the challenge-and-response of argument—is the inner logic, or dialectic, of the tragic form as it appears in fully developed drama.

It is a way, of course, of making an important—and "tragic"—statement about the nature of truth. In tragedy, truth is not revealed as one harmonious whole; it is many-faceted, ambiguous, a sum of irreconcilables—and that is one source of its terror. As the Poet contemplated Job's case, he saw that the single-voiced response—the lament or the diatribe—was inadequate. The case was not clear; at its center was a bitter dilemma, every aspect of which, in the full and fair portrayal of human suffering like Job's, must be given a voice. The Counselors were partly right, and Job was partly wrong. Job was at once justified in complaining against his God, and deeply guilty. There was no discharge in that war. The dramatic form above all others conveys this sense of the jarring conflict of ideas-in-action, gives each its due, and shows how each qualifies and interacts on every other. It conveys directly what Jung called "the terrible ambiguity of an immediate experience."<sup>7</sup> Comedy presents ambiguities but removes their terror; in tragedy the terror remains.

This method, like the tragic vision which was a part of the Poet's racial inheritance, was not new in the literature of the Hebrews. *Job* is merely the fullest development of a racial way of expression observable in the earliest writings. For example, after the single-voiced and full-throated praise of the Creator and the Creation in the first chapter

<sup>7</sup> R. P. Blackmur, "Anna Karenina: the Dialect of Incarnation", *Kenyon Review*, Summer 1950, quotes this phrase from Jung's *Psychology and Religion* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1938), p. 55. The experience which Jung discusses in this passage is the religious experience as he defines it—the direct confronting of the "powers" ("spirits, demons, gods, laws, ideas, ideals"), the "dynamic factors" in our lives—"powerful," "dangerous," "helpful," or "grand, beautiful and meaningful enough to be devoutly adored and loved" (p. 5). He is speaking specifically of the Protestant who, lacking the mediation of the dogma and ritual of an "absolute" Church, "is defenseless against God and is no longer shielded by walls and communities" (p. 62). Jung, of course, is concerned with the terrifying effect on the individual of his discovery in himself of all the "forces waiting for liberation in the unconscious mind" (pp. 59-60). What tragedy reveals is the "terrifying ambiguity" of the forces both within and without—in the individual, in society, in the universe. It presents these forces immediately, or "unmediated."

of Genesis, the story of Adam and Eve and the Fall moves into a different mode. Many voices are heard, including the Serpent's. This is one way of saying that even this case was not entirely clear. Kierkegaard, who had a lively sense of the tragic aspect of the Old Testament, shows how Adam and Eve, though guilty, were in part justified. The Almighty had "goaded" them. The story of Abraham and Isaac, which moves forward in a kind of tragic dialectic, has frightening undertones, as Kierkegaard's famous discussion in *Fear and Trembling* shows. Moses, Jonah, and many of the Old Testament heroes and prophets argued with Jehovah, questioned his judgment, criticized his harshness or (as with Jonah) his leniency, in actual dialogue. In such ways the Hebrews surrounded even their most sacred religious figures and truths with an aura of ambiguity and qualification. Ideas, or truth, were not regarded apart, as abstractions or final causes. They were ideas-in-action, lived out and tested by men of flesh and blood. Thus like men they were in a constant process of becoming. Even Jehovah, as we see him in the Old Testament, evolved.

So the Poet of Job, true to his tradition, set his protagonist—Job, or the "Job-idea"—free to run the dialectical gamut, to test it not only against Jehovah but against all the standard human formulations that had traditionally resolved such situations. He gave Job human adversaries as well as divine, to try him at every point. Thus the movement of statement-and-reply between Job and the Counselors, now swift, now slow, gives the sense not of the static opposition of ideas in a debate but of men in action, temperamental and passionate. Job is in turn bitter and despairing, angry and defiant, pensive and exalted. The Counselors, in their turn, console, plead, argue, scold, and threaten. Nothing is left untouched in the furious spirals of the debate. The method allows for the fullest "existential" exploration of the concerns—the nature of man and the universe—without which, after the achievement of *Job* and the Greeks, tragedy is purely nominal. Again, what tragedy seems to be saying—what *Job* and the Greeks made it say—is that we come closest to the nature of man and universe in the test-situation, where the strength or weakness of the individual, to endure or let go, is laid bare. Only then does the final "yea" or "nay" have meaning. When Job in his extremity puts ironically the question of the pious psalmist, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" the Poet gives no pat answer. The answer is the total *Book of Job*, all that Job says and becomes, all that the Counselors say and do not become, all that the Voice from the Whirlwind says about man and his place in the universe. The answer is the full drama, not in any one of its parts—least of all in the pious and comforting resolution of the folk story in the last chapter.

No analysis can convey more than the bare structure of the Poet's

meaning. But the heart of his meaning, and surely the chief source of the tragic meaning for subsequent artists, is contained in the so-called Poem of Job, all that occurs between Job's opening curse (ch. 3) and 42:6, the last verse before the folk-story conclusion. This is the agon, the passion-scene, where the discoveries are made of most relevance to average, suffering, questioning humanity.

Job in the opening curse is in the torment of despair. The shock of his calamities has more than unbalanced him; it has prostrated him. For "seven days and seven nights" he has sat among the ashes, for "his grief was very great." His world has collapsed, his inherited values have been discredited. He faces at least four possible choices. He may follow the advice of his wife to "Curse God, and die." He may come to terms with his fate and accept it as deserved—the advice which his Counselors later give him. He may accept his fate, whether deserved or not, and contemplate it, like Ecclesiastes, with melancholy equanimity. Or he may strike back in some way, give vent to his feelings and carry his case wherever it may lead. The Poet does not present Job in his tragic moment as weighing these alternatives openly, although in "seven days and seven nights" he has had time to consider them all. But we get no sense of a closely reasoned choice. All we know is that he did not commit suicide (although the thought of it recurs to him later), that he "opened his mouth" and talked, and that he took this action through some mysterious dynamic within himself. There was no goddess whispering encouragement at his shoulder or divine vision leading him on. He was "unaccommodated man," moved in his first moment of bitterness to give up the struggle, but for some reason making a "gesture" first. It is this action, and the action which follows from it, which establishes Job as hero. It had what Aristotle called "magnitude": it involved Job totally, and he was a man of high estate on whom many people depended; it involved Job's world totally, since it questioned the basis of its belief and modes of life; it transcended Job's world, horizontally as well as vertically, as the perennial relevance of Job's problem, from his time to ours, shows. And it involved Job in total risk: "Behold he will slay me; I have no hope."<sup>8</sup>

Although there is little in literature as black as the opening verses of Job's curse, in the speech as a whole there is a saving ambiguity which predicts the main movement of the Poem. This movement, in brief, is from the obsessive egotism (like Lear's or Ahab's) that sees particular misfortune as a sign of universal ruin (and even wills it, for revenge or escape or oblivion) toward a mood more rational, outgoing, and compassionate. Job's first words are of furious, not passive, des-

<sup>8</sup> This translation (or close variations of it) of 13:15 is generally accepted. See *A Commentary on the Bible*, ed. A. S. Peake, London, 1919, article "Job," by R. S. Franks. Cf. Moffatt's translation: "He may kill me—what else can I expect?"

pair. He has been wounded in his pride, humiliated as well as stricken. He curses life and the parents who gave him life. He would have his birthday blotted from the calendar; he would have all men go into mourning on that day and the light of heaven be darkened. He rages in the worst kind of arrogant, romantic rebellion. Yet gradually there is a change, however slight. The furious commands of the opening verses change to questions: "Why died I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?" The plaintive tone leads to one more contemplative, as he thinks not of universal darkness but of rest with all those who have gone before, "the kings and the counsellors of the earth . . . princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver." He has a word for the weary and oppressed, the small as well as the great. The first-person pronoun changes to the third: "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul . . . ? Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?" Although he returns in the last three verses to a mood of anguish and dread, it is more like the response to a spasm of pain—"For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me"—than the nihilism of the opening verses.

Thus Job does not abandon life, and as he rallies and reorganizes he opens up new and redeeming reaches of life. In the reverse of the way they expect, the Counselors assist in the process. Their arguments sting and thrust, kindle new energies in him, and compel him to ever greater expressive efforts. The dialectic works beneficially with Job. Eliphaz's first speech (ch. 4) is a curious combination of scolding ("Behold, thou hast instructed many . . . But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest"), of mystical witness ("Now a thing was secretly brought to me . . . in thoughts from the visions of the night"), and of the proverbial comforts about suffering as the common lot and as a corrective discipline. At the end of the speech Job is thoroughly aroused. He will not abide such half-faced fellowship. He will not be accused of impatience by men who have never had their own patience put to the test. He asks of them neither material aid nor deliverance "from the enemy's hand." What he wants is instruction. "Teach me, and I will hold my tongue: and cause me to understand wherein I have erred." This is a great gain over the nihilism of the Curse. To be sure, as often happens in the long sequences to come, Job relapses in the second half of his answer to Eliphaz (ch. 7) into self-pity and lamentation: "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope." But the speech ends in a surge of vigor, in defiance not so much of the Counselors as of Jehovah himself.

It is in this passage (7:11-21) that he commits himself to the ultimate risk: "Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the

anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul." Later, in his first reply to Zophar (ch. 13), it is clear that he understands the full terms of the risk: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him." But by now Job has come to see his own ways and his own complaints in a different light. He sees his misfortunes not as unique but as typical of man's lot. In one phase of his being, at least, he is becoming a partisan of the human race.<sup>9</sup> "What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him"—only to torment him? He never forgets his own personal grievances, but his thoughts turn ever more outward; he does not "rest in his own suffering."<sup>10</sup> He discourses upon God's capricious ways with all mankind: "He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them" (12:23); upon the flourishing of the wicked and the oppression of the poor (chs. 21, 24); upon the element of chance in all life (ch. 21). For all his frequent lapses into despair, as sudden pain strikes him or as his thoughts turn back to happier times or forward to an uncertain future, he speaks as one having shouldered the burden of humanity.

But this growing sense of partisanship—like Ahab's, "for all that has maddened and tormented the whole race from Adam down"<sup>11</sup>—is only one phase of Job's experience, the structure of which, as the Poet presents it, represents an ordering of experience which many subsequent tragedies have imitated and all of them shared in part, some emphasizing one aspect, some another. It was not until Job gained some mastery over his despair, chose his course, and began his defense, that the full meaning of his position grew upon him. This realization was to be the source of his greatest suffering, beside which his physical afflictions were easy to bear. In justice he could decry the miseries of the human lot and the baffling ways of the Almighty, but he could not forget that it was Jehovah's hands that had (as he says) "made me and fashioned me together round about . . . [and] granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." He was on the

<sup>9</sup> Wallace Fowlie ("Swann and Hamlet: A Note on the Contemporary Hero," *Partisan Review*, May-June 1942) finds this a distinguishing characteristic of the tragic as opposed to the romantic hero. The romantic hero, he says, is preoccupied with the "intermittences" of his own heart; the tragic hero moves beyond them to make "a pact [with the world] that is unremitting and sealed" (p. 202).

<sup>10</sup> T. S. Eliot, *The Family Reunion*, Pt. II, sc. 1. Copyright 1939 by T. S. Eliot; renewed, 1967, by Esme Valerie Eliot. Reprinted by permission of Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc. and Faber & Faber, Ltd.

"To rest in our own suffering

Is evasion of suffering. We must learn to suffer more."

William Van O'Connor, *Climates of Tragedy* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1943), p. 48, discusses this quotation in connection with tragedy's affirmation of the possibility of "awareness and dignity through suffering." And see below, n. 13.

<sup>11</sup> *Moby-Dick*, ch. 41 ("Moby Dick").

horns of a terrible dilemma—the clue to the nature of his suffering. He saw that what he had done, though justified, was wrong. He had been justified in asserting his innocence and in speaking out for all men who had been afflicted as he had. But it was wrong, as the Counselors repeatedly and rightly dinned into his ears, to defy the God whom he loved. If he could have regarded the idea of Justice abstractly, his suffering would not have involved this peculiar anguish. It was the Person in the impersonal that Job loved and could not repudiate—and which monomaniac Ahab hated and spat upon. It is this agony of dilemma, of the knowledge of the ambiguity of every choice, that, since *Job* and the Greeks, has defined tragic suffering. The capacity for such suffering (and even Ahab "has his humanities"<sup>12</sup>) has ever since been the mark of the tragic figure—he who is caught between the necessity to act and the knowledge of inevitable guilt. Job felt duty-bound to challenge God, Orestes to kill his mother, Hamlet to kill his uncle; and all of them knew guilt. Job had progressed from the experience of mere pain and distress to the experience of suffering.<sup>13</sup>

In the course of the long ordeal, the Poet reveals many personal qualities in Job that have since been appropriated into the tradition of formal tragedy. "The ponderous heart," the "globular brain," the "nervous lofty language" which Melville<sup>14</sup> saw as the qualities of the tragic hero are all in Job. After *Job* and the Greeks, it became part of the function of tragedy to represent, and make probable, figures of such stature. What would break lesser folk—the Counselors, or the members of the chorus—releases new powers in Job. His compulsion toward self-justification sends him far and wide over all the affairs of men, and deep within himself; and the agony of his guilt propels him ever nearer his God. He sets himself in solid debate against the Coun-

<sup>12</sup> As Captain Peleg tells Ishmael before the *Pequod* starts its journey, *Moby-Dick*, ch. 16 ("The Ship").

<sup>13</sup> The place and quality of suffering in tragedy is a central theme of this study. It is treated *passim*, mostly in connection with specific fictional contexts. See my treatment of it in "The Tragic Form," which includes the following formulation: ". . . tragic man would not define himself, like the man of corrective comedy or satire, 'I think, therefore I am'; nor like the man of achievement (epic): 'I . . . conquer, therefore I am'; nor like the religious man: 'I believe, therefore I am'; nor like the man of sensibility [the romantic]: 'I feel, therefore I am.' Although he has all these qualities (of thought, achievement, sensibility, and belief) in various forms, and degrees, the essence of his nature is brought out by suffering: 'I suffer, I will to suffer, I learn by suffering; therefore I am.' The classic statement, of course, is, Aeschylus': 'Wisdom comes alone through suffering' (Lattimore's translation); perhaps the most radical is Dostoevski's in *Notes from Underground*, B. G. Guerney's translation: 'Suffering is the sole origin of consciousness'" (*Essays in Criticism*, Oct., 1954, p. 354).

<sup>14</sup> *Moby-Dick*, ch. 16 ("The Ship").

selors: "I have understanding as well as you: I am not inferior to you." He answers their arguments in the full sweep of a massive mind, rich in learning and in the closest observation of human life. He resists every temptation to compromise or turn back, like Ahab denying Starbuck, or Hamlet thrusting aside his friends. As he gains in spiritual poise (though his course is very uneven), his mental processes become more orderly. He talks increasingly in legal terms. The universe becomes, as it were, a local court of justice where his "cause" can be "tried." "Behold now, I have ordered my cause; I know that I shall be justified." In one mood he complains that there is no "daysman," or umpire, to judge his case; in another he calls upon God to act as judge against Himself. He speaks of his "witness" and his "record" and longs to have his case recorded in a book—like Othello or Hamlet, wanting his full story told.

Nothing is more revealing of Job's (and the tragic hero's) stature than the contrast which the Poet develops between Job and the Counselors. Job outstrips them in every way. By chapter 28 Job has achieved an ironic reversal of roles: the Counselors who came to teach him are now being taught by him—and on the subject of Wisdom. He fails to convince them of the injustice of his suffering or even of the possibility of a flaw in their pat theology. But in failing to change their minds he demonstrates the littleness of minds that cannot be changed. He grows in stature as they shrink. He knows that he has achieved a vision, through suffering, beyond anything they can know. He has mystical insights, as when he sees into the time, perhaps long after his death, when his Vindicator "will stand up upon the earth," and when "without my flesh I shall see God."<sup>15</sup> On his miserable ash-heap (and this is what the Counselors never see) Job rises to heights he never reached in the days of his worldly prosperity, when in his presence "the aged arose and stood up, the princes refrained talking." His summing up, the Oath of Clearance (chs. 30-31), is orderly and composed. He is the master of his spirit. When the Voice from the Whirlwind begins its mighty oration, the Counselors seem not part of the picture at all. They return in the folk-story conclusion (41:7) only to be rebuked: "the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath."

So far, the meaning of *Job* for the tragic tradition is this: A new

<sup>15</sup> Again the AV has been emended (19:25). See R. S. Franks in Peake's *Commentary*. Cf. Anthony and Miriam Hanson, *The Book of Job*, Torch Bible Commentaries (London, SCM Press, 1953), p. 70: "Fortunately there is one important thing that does stand out of this appallingly confused passage: Job still hopes somewhere (whether in the body or out of the body, we know not) for vindication before God."

dimension of human experience, a new possibility, has been explored and rendered probable. Vision, working on the raw materials of experience, has hammered out a form. New value has been found where it was least expected—in the clearest possible case of unjustified suffering. Suffering itself, as the Poet of Job defines it, has been made to yield knowledge, and the way has been plotted out. After this achievement by the Poet of Job and after the similar achievement by Aeschylus in what may have been the same era of antiquity (the fifth century), the "tragic form" was permanently available. No subsequent artist whose imagination was attracted to this mode of writing could ignore it.

It has seemed to many that in the final stages of *Job*—the speech of Elihu, the Voice from the Whirlwind, Job's repentance, and the folk-story ending—tragic meaning, as the Poet has so far defined it, is swallowed up in mystical revelation or orthodox piety. In one sense it is true that the final phase of Job's experience carries him beyond the tragic domain, and the book as a whole is a religious book and not a formal tragedy. The revelation granted Job, and his repentance, would seem to deny the essence of his previous situation—the agony of dilemma, of the opposing compulsions of necessity and guilt. Certainly no such unequivocal Voice speaks to Antigone or Hamlet or Hester Prynne, who conclude the dark voyage in the light of their own unaided convictions, and live out their dilemmas to the end. But in these final scenes the tragic vision of the Poet is still active. Ambiguities remain, and the central question of the book is unanswered. Also, in the treatment of Job's pride, in the final revelation of how Job learned humility, in the irony with which the "happy ending" of the folk story is left to make its own statement, the Poet includes much that is relevant, as we can now see, to the tragic tradition.

At the end of his Oath of Clearance, Job had achieved a state of what Aristotle called *catharsis*. He had challenged the Almighty, made his case, and purged his spirit. He was in a Hamlet-like state of readiness. In taking him beyond *catharsis* into abject repentance and self-abhorrence, the Poet makes of him a religious rather than a tragic figure; but the Poem as a whole makes an important statement about pride, which the Greeks were to make repeatedly, though from a different perspective. According to the Poet, and to the Greek tragedians, pride like Job's is justified. It has its ugly and dark side, but it was through pride that Job made his spiritual gains and got a hearing from Jehovah himself. The Lord favoured Job's pride and rebuked the safe orthodoxy of the Counselors. The pride that moved Job is the dynamic of a whole line of tragic heroes, from Oedipus to Ahab. It

is always ambiguous and often destructive, but it is the very hallmark of the type.<sup>16</sup>

Although the speech of Elihu (chs. 32-37) is generally regarded as not the work of the original Poet of Job, and although it repeats tiresomely much of what the other Counselors had said, it has the distinction of dealing not so much with Job's past sinfulness as with his present pride. Elihu, young, fiery, and a little pompous, is shocked that the Counselors have allowed Job in his pride to have the last word, and he sets out to humble him. Job's eyes have been blinded by pride, and his ears deafened: "For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not . . . he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man." "Why dost thou strive against him?" Elihu suggests a way of learning humility that is a curious blend of religious insight and the wisdom of tragedy. Job must see in God's chastisement not only discipline and a just judgment, but he must see that in his affliction there is "delivery"—through suffering he may learn: "He delivereth the afflicted by their affliction, and openeth their ear in oppression."<sup>17</sup> But not only this: Job must see with his own eyes. More than the other Counselors, Elihu turns Job's eyes outward. As if to prepare Job for the revelations of the Voice from the Whirlwind (in this respect Elihu's speech is a firm dramatic bridge between Job's "Oath of Clearance" and the climactic chapters of the book), Elihu asks him to contemplate the magnificence of the external universe. "Stand still," he says, "and consider the wondrous works of God." He rhapsodizes on the lightning, the thunder, and the wind; and he sees God's concern for men even in the snow, ice, cold, and rain,

Whether it be for correction, or for his land,  
Or for lovingkindness . . .<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> As with suffering, the place and treatment of pride in tragedy is a major theme of this study. Tragic pride is not to be equated with sin or weakness. The Counselors, and the Chorus, invariably argue against pride, urging caution and moderation, because they see it as blasphemous or presumptuous, and most surely leading to suffering; but tragedy does not prejudge it. Speaking of "the tragic flaw" in much these same terms, Arthur Miller ("Tragedy and the Common Man," *New York Times Theater Section*, Feb. 27, 1949, p. 1) shows how it can on occasion transfigure the "common man" and make him a fit subject for tragic treatment: "It is not peculiar to grand or elevated characters. . . . Nor is it necessarily a weakness. . . . [It] is really nothing . . . but [the hero's] inherent unwillingness to remain passive in the face of what he conceives to be a challenge to his dignity, his image of his rightful status."

<sup>17</sup> The translation of 36:15 is from the American Standard Version.

<sup>18</sup> This translation of 37:13 is from the American Standard Version.

The main movement of Job's experience, from the morbid concern for his own suffering toward membership and partisanship in the human family, is extending even farther outward. He must now experience the Infinite or the Absolute. Even though in formal tragedy there is no such apocalypse as Job presently experiences, the direction is the same. Through suffering, as Aeschylus wrote, men learn—not only their littleness and sinfulness but the positive and creative possibilities of themselves and the world they live in. They learn them, in *Job* as in later tragedy, not from Counselors or friends, but directly, on their pulses. As in the long debate with the Counselors Job made discoveries about himself and the human realm, so now the Voice from the Whirlwind opens up for him the vast economy of the universe. In this new perspective, the question "Why did I suffer?" loses its urgency.

The question loses its urgency—Job never asks it again—but it is never answered. To the Poet, in contrast to the teaching of the Counselors or *The Book of Proverbs* or the first Psalm, the universe was not reasonable and not always just. He did not see it as a sunny and secure place for human beings, where to prosper one only has to be good. Even after the Voice ceased, Job was no nearer an understanding of what justice is than when he began his complaints. Unjustified suffering must be accepted as part of a mystery; it is not for man to reason why. The universe is a realm of infinite complexity and power, in which catastrophe may fall at any time on the just as well as the unjust. There may be enough moral cause-and-effect to satisfy the members of the chorus or the Counselors. But all the hero can do, if he is visited as Job was, is to persevere in the pride of his conviction, to appeal to God against God, and if he is as fortunate as Job, hear his questionings echo into nothingness in the infinite mystery and the glory.

Even the folk-story ending contains a tantalizing ambiguity. Few people go away happy at the end of *Job*, or if they do they miss the point. Of course, the sense of frustration is largely eliminated by Job's rewards. God is good; justice of a sort has been rendered; the universe seems secure. We are inclined to smile at how neatly it works out—the mathematical precision of the twofold restoration of Job's possessions and his perfectly balanced family, seven sons and three daughters—a sign perhaps that we are in the domain of something less elevated than Divine Comedy. But the universe seems secure only to those who do not question too far. Can a new family make up for the one Job lost? What about the faithful servants who fell to the Sabeans and Chaldeans? These questions the folk story ignores, and its reassuring final picture also makes it easy to forget Job's suffering and his unanswered question. Although the irony of the folk conclusion seems unmistakable, it was no doubt this easy piety, like the pious emenda-

tions to the bitterness of Ecclesiastes, that made *The Book of Job* acceptable to the orthodox for centuries. Actually, it is a "dangerous" book.<sup>19</sup> Although the Hebrews had their recalcitrant figures, capable, like the Poet of Job, of deep penetration into the realm of tragedy, they are rightly regarded as the people of a Covenant, a Code, and a Book. This is one reason, perhaps, why they never developed a tragic theater, where their beliefs and modes of living would be under constant scrutiny. Their public communication was through synagogue and pulpit; their prophets and preachers proclaimed the doctrine of obedience to divine law, and the rabbis endlessly proliferated the rules for daily life. The rebellious Job was not typical. For the most part, their heroes were lonely, God-summoned men whose language was that of witness to the one true light.

<sup>19</sup> See Hanson, *The Book of Job*: The "poem . . . clearly shows itself to be the vision of a great and daring mind. . . . We have the feeling of reaching darkness rather than light. A mystery has been probed, little help given, and the unconvincing conclusion only deepens the mystery . . . [pp. 16-17]. For an approach to the problem of innocent suffering that can be of comfort and solace to the Christian in trouble, it is not wise to look to the Book of Job . . ." (p. 20). The Hansons, however, true to the fundamentally religious nature of *Job* as a whole, shift the emphasis from the problem of innocent suffering to Job's "encounter with the Living God."

# The Purpose and Method of the Writer

by *G. Buchanan Gray*

If we are right in concluding that a single writer is responsible for the Prologue, the speeches of Job, of his three friends and of Yahweh (apart from the passages indicated in the preceding table<sup>1</sup> as possible additions), and the Epilogue, what was the purpose of this writer, and what are the distinctive features of his thought and outlook on life which he reveals in his work?

It would no doubt be as inadequate a description of Job, as, for example, of *Paradise Lost*, to call it merely a didactic poem; it would be even further from the truth to regard it as a purely objective dramatic poem in which the author maintains an interested but quite impartial attitude towards the various characters which are introduced and the various points of view which are expressed by them. On the other hand, the author obviously ranges himself with Yahweh in approving Job as against his friends; as passionately as Job he rejects the interpretation of life maintained by the friends, and as decisively as Yahweh the estimate of human character (so closely associated with the friends' outlook on life) that is offered by the Satan. The writer's purpose is never so directly formulated as Milton's—to

assert Eternal Providence  
And justify the ways of God to men;

nor is it coextensive with it; but it is akin, and not really concealed, and the differences of opinion which have prevailed with regard to the purpose of the book have been due to seeking from the author more than he was able or intended to offer.<sup>2</sup>

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*"The Purpose and Method of the Writer" by G. Buchanan Gray. From the Introduction by G. Buchanan Gray to A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job (International Critical Commentary), by Samuel R. Driver and G. Buchanan Gray (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921), Sec. V, 1-lxiv. Reprinted by permission of T. & T. Clark.*

<sup>1</sup> [At the conclusion of a long section, The Origin and History of the Book (xxv-l)—Ed.]

<sup>2</sup> [Here, and elsewhere in this essay, very long paragraphs have been divided. Gray's numeration has been omitted—Ed.]

He had no clear-cut theology, like Milton's, enabling him to say why God acted as He did and thus positively to justify His ways; but through pain and trial he had discovered in his own experience that God did not abandon the sufferer, and therefore he was able to assert that God did not send sufferings on men merely for the reasons commonly assigned, and that it was not necessarily or always true that as an individual suffered, so he had sinned; and thus, if he could not positively justify God, he could at least vindicate Him against the ways attributed to Him by the current opinion of his time, represented in the poem by the friends. There was also another side to his experience: he had discovered not only that God did not abandon the sufferer, but also that suffering and loss had not detached him from God, that it was possible to serve and love God not for the outward things He gave, but for what He was in Himself. The book aims not at solving the entire problem of suffering, but at vindicating God and the latent worth of human nature against certain conclusions drawn from a partial observation of life.

The book opens with the presentation of a perfect character: Job is so described in the first words of the narrative (1<sup>1</sup>), and the truth of the description is endorsed by Yahweh (1<sup>8</sup> 2<sup>3</sup>); the kind of life and character thus described in general terms is indicated in detail elsewhere in the book (cp. especially c. 31: also, e.g., 4<sup>3</sup>); and see n. on 1<sup>1</sup>).<sup>3</sup> But the Satan disputes the inherent worth of this character: Job, he insinuates, had lived as he had, not simply with the result (1<sup>1</sup> n.) that he had become outwardly prosperous, but in order that he might prosper; he had served God not for God's sake, but to obtain the handsome price of such service: human nature is incapable of pure devotion to God, human conduct is not disinterested; if the payment for it ceases, or becomes uncertain, man's service of God will cease, man will no longer address God reverentially, or affectionately, but blasphemingly; where love and trust had seemed to be while such qualities received their price, there hate and contempt will certainly be when the price is withdrawn. Such is the issue between Yahweh and the Satan, Yahweh upholding, the Satan calling in question, the integrity, the sincerity, the disinterestedness of Job. Such also had been the issue in the mind of the writer who wrote the speeches that follow the opening narrative; he had faced the same problem of life as Plato in the *Republic* (Bk. ii.); he had realized that the really perfect man must be prepared to prove his perfectness by maintaining it even when there befell him calamity such as would have seemed the meet sequel to wickedness, and such as actually had the effect on the ordinary judgement of men of making him seem to have been wicked though actually

<sup>3</sup> [Occasional references to Notes are to the verse by verse commentary that follows the Introduction—Ed.]

he had been good. The very friends of Job, held by the dogma that a man of broken fortunes cannot have been "integer vitae scelerisque purus,"<sup>4</sup> infer from Job's calamities that he must have been wicked, though his own conscience and God's unerring judgement assert that the life on which these calamities descended had been free from blame.

Within the Prologue the issue is decided against the Satan: when the Satan sneeringly says to God, Take away all the wealth Thou hast given Job, then go and see him, and he will curse Thee, he is obviously contemplating the *immediate* result of deprivation on Job; for when in the second scene in heaven he is challenged by Yahweh to admit that Job's conduct and temper under loss have proved the Satan's estimate of him wrong, he does not plead that the experiment has not had long enough to work, but claims that it is merely necessary to withdraw health as well as wealth, and Job will at once cease blessing and curse. The Satan's estimate is based on weaker characters, exemplified by Job's wife, who would have Job do what the Satan had counted on his doing; but Job himself rejects the advice of his wife in words which are tantamount to saying: to curse God now would be to prove that I have served and blessed Him hitherto not for what He is, but for the good-fortune which for so long He gave me; now that ill-fortune has befallen me I can show that I serve Him for what He is. Thus Job, left at last only with bare life, without which he could be no subject of testing, and his character, which had been called in question, but which he had maintained intact under the last test that the Satan could suggest, by these words proves his disinterested attachment to Yahweh, that he had not served Him for what He gave, and thus finally and completely puts the Satan in the wrong, and that so obviously that it is unreasonable, as some have done, to complain that the writer has not depicted Yahweh pressing home the Satan's discomfiture, whether by a third scene in heaven, or in the Epilogue.

Job by his attitude in the Prologue has, unknown to himself, vindicated Yahweh's against the Satan's estimate of his character; but the result of the Satan's experiments, the origin and purpose of which remain unknown on earth, is to expose Job's character to attack from another quarter. The Satan in heaven disputes the integrity of Job's character, because prosperity had necessarily left it untested: when his prosperity forsakes Job, his friends on earth dispute his integrity on the ground that he must have sinned because he no longer prospers. Thus the Prologue opens up the question of the relation of loss and suffering to sin: with this question the Dialogue is concerned, and necessarily (for it is a crucial instance for the theory at issue) interwoven with the discussion of it is the attack on and defence of Job's integrity.

<sup>4</sup> [The Latin, from the *Odes* of Horace, Bk. I, 22, 1, may be translated "perfect in life and free from sin"—Ed.]

Between Job's rebuke of his wife with its implicit assertion of his own resignation and the opening of the Dialogue some weeks intervene; in the interval Job's experience has raised questions in his own mind: why is he, why are men born to suffer? The ready answer of his old faith would have been: men are not born to suffer; they only suffer if they sin; but his experience has proved this false in his own case, and, as he is now ready to believe, it would also be false in the case of countless others, but to the bitter question he now finds no answer. Thus he goes into the following debate convinced that the solution there repeatedly put forward is false, but with no other theory to oppose to it. To these questionings of Job his three friends, who being no fair weather friends had come to him on hearing of his calamities, had listened; they had brought with them the same old faith as Job's, but not the direct personal experience which had proved to Job its inadequacy. In all friendliness they would recall Job to the faith, and lead him to the course which that faith indicated—humble acceptance of the discipline of suffering, confession and abandonment of the sin which had brought his suffering upon him, and return to God. Job cannot accept such advice, for in doing so he would be false to his conviction of his integrity.

The nature of the Dialogue—so different from those of Plato—is thus determined by the nature of the difference in character of what the two parties—for the three friends constitute a single party—stand for: the friends maintain a theory, Job defends a fact—the reality and truth of his conviction of innocence. The Dialogue, therefore, is not directed towards reaching a correct or more adequate theory, but towards emphasizing the certainty of the fact and the consequent falseness of the prevailing theory. So far, indeed, is Job from opposing a different *theory* to the theory of the friends that his own outlook, and his own interpretation of what has happened, is still largely governed by the theory which he also had once unquestioningly held; and which is still the only *positive theory* to hold the field till driven from it by the vindication of the truth of Job's conviction, which proves the theory false. Because he has no other theory of suffering than that of the friends, he can imagine no other *just* cause for his own sufferings than sin on his part; since, then, as he knows directly and for certain that such just cause does not exist, he *infers* that his suffering has been unjustly inflicted, that God—the God at least of his own old and the friends' still cherished theory—is unjustly causing his suffering, has changed without good cause from being his friend into his enemy.

In the early days of his loss, Job was conscious only of his own unchanged attitude towards God; as time gives opportunity for reflection, and more especially as the friends press home the inference, inevitable under the theory, that because Job greatly suffers he must have

greatly sinned, Job awakes to another aspect of his strange fortunes; loss gives him the opportunity of proving his willingness to receive from God ill-fortune no less than good fortune; of remaining, when rewards fail, for His own sake, the servant, the friend of God; but loss at the same time, if the friends and their theory are right, is God's unambiguous assertion that He has rejected Job and become his enemy. This is Job's severest trial of all—a trial the Satan failed to think of; and under the stress of it Job says much that doubtless needs correction, and yet nothing that corresponds to anything the Satan can have meant by "cursing God to His face," nothing that reflects back upon Job's previous character in such a way as to indicate that it lacked the wholeness which Yahweh claimed for it and the Satan denied. Job nowhere regrets his previous service of God, and never demands the restoration of the previous rewards; what he does seek is God Himself, God unchanged, still his friend—on his side, unestranged from him, and not, as the theory assures him He has now become, his enemy; and what he seeks he never really and permanently despairs of finding; against God, seeming by the calamities He sends to take away his character, he appeals to God to vindicate it (16<sup>18-21</sup> n. 17<sup>3</sup>), and rises to certainty that He will do so, if not this side death, then beyond (19<sup>27</sup>); but it is only for this vindication, for the realization that God really remains his friend, not for the restoration of good fortune, that Job contemplates the intervention of God on his behalf.

It is unnecessary to review in detail here all the speeches of the friends and Job's replies to them: they cover the same ground again and again. So far as the friends are concerned it is of the very essence of the writer's purpose that they should one and all say essentially the same thing: they are not introduced to represent many existing theories; but the three of them, expounding the same theory, represent that as the unchallenged judgement of ancient and still current opinion. All the variety that is thus possible in the friends' speeches is variety of expression, the formulation of different aspects of the same theory, or different proofs of it, such as the divine origin of it (4<sup>12ff.</sup> Eliphaz), its antiquity (8<sup>5ff.</sup> Bildad, 15<sup>18ff.</sup> Eliphaz, 20<sup>4</sup> Sophar), the impossibility, due to man's ignorance, of successfully disputing it (11<sup>5ff.</sup> Sophar), or of such subsidiary theories as had been called in to help it out. . . . But with all the admissions and concessions that the current theory allows them to make, the friends in the development of the debate clearly make plain that the substance of the theory is that God distributes suffering and prosperity to the unrighteous and righteous respectively, and that in proportion to their righteousness or unrighteousness. . . .<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> [Some details of Gray's discussion of the arguments of the friends have been omitted—ED.]

In his replies to the friends, Job insists on his integrity—the fact by which their theory is shattered, their advice rendered nugatory. He agrees with them as to the might of God, and as to the frailty of human nature, carrying with it proneness to sin and yielding to temptation in *all* men, himself included; that *all* should suffer raises a question (3<sup>20</sup>), which, however, perplexing as it is, would be relatively intelligible and endurable; but while all men sin, men differ widely in the extent to which they sin, and yet it is those who like himself are relatively free from sin and within the limitations of human frailty perfect who suffer—not invariably, but often; and it is the wicked who prosper—not again invariably, but often, so that it may be said that God sends suffering indifferently on the perfect and the wicked (9<sup>22-24</sup>). *If*, then, suffering is always punishment, God is an unjust judge, inflicting punishment where it is not due, and failing to secure its infliction where it is due. Nor again will the plea of the friends do, that Job's sufferings are sent in kindness by God to deflect him from his wicked way, and so even yet secure an end of life richer and more amply blessed than even his earlier life had been; Job has no wicked way to be deflected from, as his own conscience attests and God Himself—though this, of course, is unknown to Job and the friends—has insisted. Starting from the same point—that all suffering is penal—Job and the friends thus reach different conclusions—he, with eyes opened to the facts of life but himself not yet rid of the theory, concluding that God is unjust (9<sup>15ff.</sup> 19<sup>6</sup>) though mighty (9<sup>2ff.</sup> 12<sup>18-25</sup>), not only letting Job suffer, but letting the wicked enjoy life to the full and to the end (c. 21); they, distorting or blind to facts, that God is both mighty and just. This is a sufficiently clear-cut difference.

But Job is also at issue with himself. The old *theory* leads inevitably to the conclusion that God is unjust, but the old *experience* of God still prompts him to trust God as being good as well as mighty. So long as the theory dominates him, he can only wish and pray that this mighty unjust God would leave him alone, cease to think it worth His while to continue to torment him (7<sup>17-21</sup> 10<sup>20</sup> 19<sup>22</sup>); but when the old experience of God (20<sup>2ff.</sup>) reasserts its influence, what he longs for is that God should again speak to him, recognize him (14<sup>15</sup>), yearn for him (7<sup>21d</sup>), admit his innocence and even vindicate it against (16<sup>18-17</sup> 19<sup>25-27</sup>) His own charges, made in the language of misfortune, that he has sinned, and so far from being perfect is one of the most imperfect and wicked of men.

The double issue—that of Job with the friends, and that of Job with himself—should be determined when God intervenes; and if we have rightly analysed these issues, in the speeches of Yahweh—less directly, perhaps, than we might at first expect—and in the Epilogue, these issues are determined. Certainly the speech of Yahweh does not

contain what Job had not demanded, a positive theory of the meaning or purpose of suffering—and doubtless for the very good reason that the author himself had no such theory; had he had, he would probably have represented Job discovering this theory through suffering, and God at last approving Job's theory as against that of the friends; as it is, he is content to make clear the truth of Job's and the falseness of the friends' assertion as to the fact of Job's integrity. What Job had demanded was that God should formulate the charges of sin for which his sufferings had been sent; and to this God replies in the only possible way (cp. 1<sup>8</sup>) by formulating no such charge. The speech of Yahweh contains a charge, it is true; but it is a charge of a different kind; and the Epilogue in the most direct terms pronounces Job in the right and the friends in the wrong.

Are the speech with its charge and the Epilogue with its vindication at variance with one another? In particular, does the speech condemn where the Epilogue acquits Job? There certainly is a difference of judgment; but is it on the same issue? When, in the opening words of His speech, Yahweh asks: Who is this that darkeneth the purpose (of God) with words spoken without knowledge, He is certainly under the form of a question definitely charging Job with having spoken ignorantly and misleadingly about God, and this Job in his response admits (42<sup>8</sup>). On the other hand, in the Epilogue Yahweh directly asserts that Job has said what was right, and the friends what was wrong about God. Is the one a condemnation, the other an acquittal *on the same charge*? In attempting a reply to this question, it is necessary to take into account the speech of Yahweh as a whole, and to observe what it does not contain as well as what it does. What the speech does not contain is singularly important; for its silence is a tacit repetition of the judgement challenged by the Satan in the Prologue, an anticipation of the vindication of Job against the friends expressed in the Epilogue, and a justification of one of Job's two thoughts of God against the other. The speech in no way goes back on Yahweh's judgement in the Prologue; it does not in the slightest degree admit the justice of the Satan's impugnment of the inner springs, or the friends' impugnment of the outward elements of Job's conduct before his sufferings came upon him: it does not, as Job had at times feared, show God, when He appears, unjustly treating him as and pronouncing him guilty of sins such as could account for his sufferings. Thus the speech tacitly confirms the voice of Job's conscience, that his life had been free from blame.

The condemnation implied in the opening and closing words (38<sup>2</sup> 40<sup>2</sup>) of the speech is of Job's criticism of God's ways, not as they actually were, but as they would have been if the theory of suffering being always and merely penal were true; in other words, it is a con-

demnation of something that had taken place *after* the calamity had befallen Job, of something consequently that was not the cause of that suffering. It is at the same time a condemnation of the theory persistently maintained by the friends and only half abandoned by Job himself; for that theory implied a claim to an extent of acquaintance with God's ways which it is the purpose of the speech to show that man did not possess. For the rest, the speech is directed towards illustrating the marvellous range of Yahweh's activities, the innumerable elements, inexplicable by man, in His ways. In certain respects this may seem irrelevant: Job no less than the friends had acknowledged that God's ways were past finding out; but Job in charging God with injustice had made use of the old theory that implicitly laid claim to a complete knowledge of God's ways with men; Job's acknowledgment of fault (42<sup>8-9</sup>) is accordingly limited to the confession that he had spoken beyond his knowledge.

But the speech of Yahweh accompanies an appearance or direct manifestation of Yahweh to Job, and in this respect is the direct response of Yahweh to Job's deepest desire: Job has at last found Yahweh; and, in spite of the rebuke of his words beyond knowledge, he has found Yahweh on his side, no more estranged from him than in the days of his former prosperity, but more intimately known; as compared with his former, his present knowledge is as sight to hearing, as direct, first hand personal to second hand and traditional knowledge. So far from his earlier sense of God's friendship having been shown by his sufferings to be a delusion, its reality has been vindicated, and by God's response to his appeal his communion with God has been intensified.

So we may relate the speech and the accompanying manifestation of God to the purpose of the book; but inasmuch as that speech had to condemn the theory without putting another in its place and to criticize Job for continuing to make use of it, even when his own experience was showing that it had broken down, for the sake of clearness at least it was essential that the book should close with an unequivocal reassertion of what God had asserted in the Prologue, and the Satan there and the friends in the Debate had denied—the integrity of the man on whom the great sufferings had fallen. This is reasserted in two ways, both of which leave nothing lacking in the explicitness of the assertion.

In the first place, Yahweh in the Epilogue directly pronounces Job to have been in the right, the friends to have been in the wrong; but there is one remarkable aspect of Yahweh's words: what He says is that Job has spoken truly and the friends falsely *about Him*: in this there is, so far as the judgement on Job is concerned, an apparent divergence from the condemnatory questions in 38<sup>2</sup> 40<sup>2</sup>; but in God's speech to Job there was no reference to what the friends had said of

Him; and it is this that stands first in the Epilogue and carries with it the judgement on Job's words, which if it stood alone unlimited by the context would perhaps be irreconcilable with 38<sup>2</sup> 40<sup>2</sup>. It is true, Yahweh might have said expressly that the friends falsely deny, and Job rightly asserts his innocence; but this in itself would only indirectly have indicated the falseness of the friends' *theory of God* in relation to human suffering, which it is, as we have seen, a main purpose of the writer to assert; he has therefore preferred to present Yahweh's judgement on Job and the friends in a form of words which directly asserts that the friends have spoken wrongly about God, and that in the point where they have been wrong Job has been right; in inventing charges against Job they have told lies to maintain their theory of God; in repudiating these charges and denying that his calamities are God's accusation of wickedness in him, Job has spoken right.

Not only does Yahweh thus expressly assert Job's integrity of character, He also marks it by renewed and increased outward tokens of His favour. This aspect of the Epilogue has often been judged unworthy of the author of the poem, and really inconsistent with his purpose of maintaining the possible disinterestedness of human conduct, and a virtual giving of the case away to the friends on the ground that Job's fate illustrates afresh the formula that the righteous can only suffer for their sins for a time and must ultimately prosper. But the two points are not quite rightly taken. If the double prosperity of Job's latter days had been the price he demanded for continued service of God, the objection would hold; but it was not: and what Job had demanded was something very different—the vindication of his character. Again the restoration to fortune falls not after any confession on the part of Job of sins which had caused his sufferings, as Eliphaz had led him to expect that it might, but immediately after the judgement of God that Job the sufferer has far surpassed the friends who had not suffered, in righteousness. Job's character being directly vindicated, his disinterestedness established, there was no reason why the story should end with the sufferings inflicted for a particular purpose made perpetual after the purpose had been achieved.

The removal of the speech of Yahweh, if the Epilogue remained, would leave the vindication of Job and the consequent condemnation of the theory of the friends unobscured, not to say clearer than it is; and since the speech contains no positive theory of suffering, no counter theory to that of the friends, it has to some appeared alien to the original work. Yet the omission of the speech would leave Job without that direct manifestation and speech to him of God which he had desired, and unanswered except by the restoration of his fortunes, which he had not desired; God would still speak at the end of the debate, but—in condemnation, it is true—to Eliphaz only! Towards Job

he would then remain silent to the end. If, then, the speech can be related in some such way as has been attempted above to the rest of the book, it is certainly safest to retain it; for there are no independent reasons of style, etc., for regarding the chapters as secondary.<sup>6</sup> Had an interpolator felt called upon to compose a speech, it is only too probable that he would, like the author of Elihu, have dwelt more clearly and directly upon Job's blameworthiness. On the other hand, it is difficult to see what kind of speech, creating fewer difficulties or giving greater satisfaction, could have been composed by a writer who like the original author (1) intended to insist that Job had not suffered for sins he had committed, and that the theory which necessitated the inference that he had, was therefore false; and (2) had yet no positive theory of suffering to propound, and was rather, perhaps, inclined to deprecate the formation of fresh theories, lest, resting as they must upon inadequate knowledge, they too should have practical results as terrible as his own experience had shown flowed from the current theory. For these reasons, while still sensible of certain difficulties and the necessity for some subtlety in defending the speech as an integral part of the book, I now retain it more decisively than in my *Critical Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 119–122.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> [Gray refers to §30, earlier in his Introduction (xlviii–xlix)—Ed.]

<sup>7</sup> [A final paragraph and extended excursus on the Elihu-section have been omitted—Ed.]

# Tragedy and Religion

by *D. D. Raphael*

It has often been noted that Tragedy faces the problems that lie at the heart of religion. Although Tragedy does not have a directly moral purpose, as Aristotle and Hegel suppose, it is deeply concerned with morality. It deals with evil and the effects of evil. Above all, the great tragedians are disturbed by injustice, and are led to wonder whether the power that moves the world is just. Not all Tragedy, not even all great Tragedy, is occupied with this particular problem, but it certainly appears in many of the greatest tragic dramas.

Thus Tragedy comes near to religion. But there are two reasons why the path of Tragedy tends to diverge from that of religion as we understand it in our Biblical tradition. First, Judaism and Christianity take it for granted that God must be just, and that the problem of innocent suffering must have a solution. If a tragedian insists upon such a solution (as Aeschylus seems to do), his approach to the problem is compatible with the religious spirit. But if, as more often happens, he simply pinpoints the problem without offering any solution, his attitude is not that of religious faith but of the religious questioning that leaves open the gate to scepticism at least as wide as the gate to faith.

The issue is stated concisely and categorically by Professor I. A. Richards:

Tragedy is only possible to a mind which is for the moment agnostic or Manichean. The least touch of any theology which has a compensating Heaven to offer the tragic hero is fatal.<sup>1</sup>

Less satisfactorily, Professor Karl Jaspers confines himself to the destiny of the hero and omits the implication for theology proper:

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<sup>1</sup> "Tragedy and Religion" by D. D. Raphael. From Chapter 2 of *The Paradox of Tragedy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960; London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1960), pp. 37-51. Copyright © 1960 by Indiana University Press. Reprinted by permission of Indiana University Press and George Allen & Unwin Ltd.

<sup>1</sup> *Principles of Literary Criticism*, London: Kegan Paul, 1924, p. 246.

Christian salvation opposes tragic knowledge. The chance of being saved destroys the tragic sense of being trapped without chance of escape. Therefore no genuinely Christian tragedy can exist.<sup>2</sup>

Both these writers affirm their universal propositions with a confidence equalled only by their brevity. Evidently they think it unnecessary to discuss any apparently negative instances. For Professor Richards there is no need, since he considers that only a bare handful of so-called Tragedies deserve the name anyway. He admits the six masterpieces of Shakespeare. Practically all the rest of tragic drama, including the whole of Greek Tragedy, he regards as "pseudo-tragedy." Professor Jaspers is more liberal—but less clear about his position. Earlier in his book he has listed different types of tragic drama, among them the "Christian Tragedy" of Racine and Calderón; but when he decides that "no genuinely Christian tragedy can exist," he does not say anything clearly to indicate whether he thinks the plays of Racine and Calderón fail to be tragic or fail to be Christian.

A more careful statement of the position of Tragedy in relation to religion is given by the late Professor Una Ellis-Fermor:

The tragic mood is balanced between the religious and the non-religious interpretations of catastrophe and pain, and the form, content, and mood of the play which we call a tragedy depend upon a kind of equilibrium maintained by these opposite readings of life, to neither of which the dramatist can wholly commit himself.<sup>3</sup>

This does not differ radically from I. A. Richards's statement that the tragic mood is "agnostic or Manichean." Indeed there is one place<sup>4</sup> where Miss Ellis-Fermor definitely espouses the second alternative, speaking of "that Manichaeistic balance from which tragedy springs." She also repeats Richards's point about "a compensating Heaven" when she says that "progression into beatitude" makes Tragedy impossible.<sup>5</sup> The value of her contribution lies in her insistence that the "balance" or "equilibrium" of the tragic attitude lies between a religious and a non-religious impression of suffering. She explains the difference in this way. The non-religious impression is simply an "intense awareness of evil and pain." The religious is an inkling of "some reconciliation with or interpretation in terms of good." If there is a conflict in the mind between the two impressions, there arises "a sense of mystery," an "assumption that evil can never be sounded, . . . that its causes will

<sup>2</sup> *Tragedy Is Not Enough*, London: Gollancz, 1953, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> *The Frontiers of Drama*, London: Methuen, 1945, pp. 17-18.

<sup>4</sup> P. 146.

<sup>5</sup> P. 23n.

never fully reveal themselves, even to the most passionate questioning."<sup>6</sup>

Another variation on the same theme can be found in the book of Mr. Chu Kwang-Tsien to which I referred in the preceding section. He not only illustrates from the Bible and from the drama of Christian Europe the thesis that Tragedy and religion do not mix, but also considers the evidence from China and India, where, he tells us, the drama has not included Tragedy. A. W. Schlegel, in his comparison (published in 1807) between Racine's *Phèdre* and Euripides' *Hippolytus*, pointed out the discrepancy between the Greek idea of tragic fatality and the Christian idea of Providence, and suggested that a Christian poet might find it impossible to compose a genuine Tragedy. Chu Kwang-Tsien turns Schlegel's "might" into a "must."

With its emphasis on the moral order of the world, on Original Sin and Last Judgement, on submission and humility, Christianity is in every sense antagonistic to the spirit of Tragedy. Tragedy, as it represents the struggle of man with Fate, and as it often expresses vividly to our eyes inexplicable evils and undeserved sufferings, has always something profane and blasphemous in it.<sup>7</sup>

Elsewhere, he goes farther and insists that Tragedy is hostile not only to Christianity but to religion in general and to all metaphysics. (I should explain that he restricts the name of "religion" to those faiths which include a *consistent* theology, and he therefore denies that the Greek ideas of the gods constituted a religion.) Both religion and metaphysical philosophy, he says, think they can solve the problem of evil by means of some dogma. The dogma quiets our questioning and satisfies the intellect or at least the emotions. Tragedy, however, finds no solution to the problem of evil. It, too, gives repose and satisfaction, but in a different way, simply by presenting "brilliant images" of the suffering that poses the problem. It "suspends judgment and loses itself in aesthetic contemplation."<sup>8</sup> At the same time, Chu Kwang-Tsien notes that "religion is born of the sense of the tragic."<sup>9</sup> From the pessimism and puzzlement of the tragic attitude, one may come to accept religious hope for the future. But when that has been done, the sense of the tragic is lost or diminished.

The four writers whose views I have mentioned constitute a fair sample of weighty opinion to the effect that Tragedy is incompatible with religion. There is weighty opinion on the other side, too; and there is room for it, if the case against religious Tragedy is confined

<sup>6</sup> P. 128.

<sup>7</sup> *The Psychology of Tragedy*, Strasbourg: Librairie Universitaire d'Alsace, 1933, p. 236.

<sup>8</sup> P. 213.

<sup>9</sup> P. 215.

to the single main point that comes out of the remarks I have quoted. All these remarks turn upon the way in which one faces the problem of evil, of undeserved suffering. I have already agreed that this problem forms the center of interest in many of the greatest Tragedies. But it is not so in all, and if the antagonism between Tragedy and optimistic religion rests upon their respective attitudes to innocent suffering, we shall have to say that such a religion makes impossible not all, but certain types of, tragic drama.

There is, however, a second reason why religion, as understood in our Biblical tradition, tends to be inimical to Tragedy. This second reason follows from the answer I have given to the question why Tragedy pleases. According to my suggestion, our pleasure is the result of regarding the tragic hero as more sublime than the power he opposes. Now if this power be identified, as it often is, with the supreme power that moves the world, the spiritual grandeur of a human being is exalted above the omnipotence of nature or "fate." A theology which makes the power of nature an expression of the power of God, must regard such a situation in Tragedy as exalting human worth above the omnipotence of God. I think that Biblical religion would find this, rather than perplexity at innocent suffering, the "something profane and blasphemous" in Tragedy. Not all tragic heroes are struggling against the power of "fate" or nature. Where they do so, whether natural power be represented as fate or psychological necessity, Biblical religion must look askance at the exaltation of human defiance. The second ground of opposition supplements the first. Neither alone applies to all Tragedy. But between the two of them it will not be easy to find a type of Tragedy which can avoid religious offence.

There is an implicit reference to the second reason in Chu Kwang-Tsien's mention of "submission and humility" among the characteristics of Christianity that are antagonistic to Tragedy, but in his development of the general theme he does not follow up this point. One aspect of it was noted long ago by the seventeenth-century critic Saint-Évremond, when discussing Corneille's dramatization of the martyrdom of Polyeucte:

The spirit of our Religion is diametrically opposed to that of Tragedy. The humility and patience of our Saints are too much the contrary of the virtues which the Theatre demands of Heroes.<sup>10</sup>

He goes on to say that Corneille's Polyeucte shows excessive zeal and ardor for a Christian. In the subsequent continuation, by other critics,

<sup>10</sup> *De la Tragédie ancienne et moderne* (1672). I take the original of my quotation, and likewise the references to Dacier (*Poétique d'Aristote*) and Lessing (*Hamburgische Dramaturgie*), from J. G. Robertson, *Lessing's Dramatic Theory*, Cambridge University Press, 1939, pp. 421-23.

of discussion of *Polyeucte* and of martyrdom as a possible subject of tragic drama, the red herring of Aristotelian doctrine obscured the issue. Dacier thinks the trouble is simply that Polyeucte is "a highly virtuous man" and therefore cannot be a tragic hero; for, in accordance with Aristotle's dictum about unqualified virtue, he cannot arouse pity and fear so as to purge the passions. Likewise Lessing says that a Christian hero is unsuited to the tragic purpose of *catharsis*. This, of course, simply misses the point. Saint-Évremond came near to it when he saw that the *kind* of virtue which is admired in a tragic hero tends to be the opposite of humility, or at least of humble submission.

I have given two reasons for finding it difficult to accommodate Tragedy to Biblical religion. In order to understand clearly why they are obstacles, we need to consider them against the background of Biblical *theology*. The first difficulty is that of reconciling divine justice with the undeserved suffering we find in the world. I. A. Richards is obviously right in implying that the tragic treatment of evil is compatible with Manichaeism. It is, however, liable to conflict with orthodox Monotheism, in which absolute goodness and justice are combined with absolute power in one God. The second difficulty is that of reconciling our religious beliefs with the quality of our admiration for the tragic hero. A tragic hero may display *some* of the typically Biblical virtues—righteousness, love, and patience. But humility is not easily made heroic; and if the tragic hero strives against omnipotence, admiration of his heroism is impious for a theology which unites omnipotence with absolute goodness. Let me illustrate the difference that Biblical theology makes.

In *Prometheus Vinctus*, Aeschylus stages a conflict between divine power and divine benevolence to mankind. Zeus represents the one, Prometheus the other. Aeschylus suggests that Zeus' imperfection arises because he is a young god; he has not yet had time to learn. His power is not backed by the wisdom that would enable him to wield power justly. Plainly, Aeschylus is himself *developing* a religion in which supreme power may be united with supreme wisdom and goodness. Until this will be accomplished, there is tragic conflict between the power of heaven and the relative impotence of wisdom (foresight, *prometheia*) that seeks to do good. The *Oresteia* discloses a similar development of thought. Older ideas of justice lead to unending evil and conflict; and Aeschylus gropes his way to the conception of a divine justice that will result in unmixed good. The old gods are to be reconciled with the new. In the *Agamemnon* and the *Choëphoroe* we are presented with the tragic conflict. The *Eumenides* resolves the conflict and puts an end to the tragic situation.

The theology of the Hebrews reached at a very early stage the idea

of a single, all-embracing God, in whom omnipotence, omniscience, justice, and goodness are bound together in unity. It follows from such a theology that there can be no conflict between the effects of these attributes in the world. There cannot be any undeserved evil, or any discrepancy between the power of natural law and the fruits of virtue. Accordingly, there is no tragedy in the Bible. This is not to say that there is no innocent suffering. For instance, Abel and Jephthah's daughter are both innocent victims of an untimely death. But the stories of their death, as told in the Bible, are not allowed to raise any theological problem. The evil is caused by man, and the moral is that we can and should choose to avoid the sins of Cain and Jephthah. Human freedom is real and effective. It can cause evil, to ourselves and others. Equally it can realize good. The choice is ours. Of course, the theological problem still lies there for those who wish to uncover it. Why should the sins of Cain and Jephthah be allowed to bring evil to the innocent as well as to themselves? But the Biblical writers do not face this problem until we come to such books as *Job*, the *Psalms*, and *Isaiah*. In the earlier narrative of the Bible there is plenty of material for Tragedy. Chu Kwang-Tsien points out the similarity between the story of Jephthah's daughter and that of Iphigeneia; and Milton tried to make a Tragedy out of the story of Samson. As told in the Bible, however, these stories are not presented as tragedy but as moral lessons on the dire effects of human guilt, and if the events described are moral lessons they serve a good purpose. It is presumed that all will work out for the best in the end. There is no sense of wasted goodness, which, as A. C. Bradley says,<sup>11</sup> is essential to Tragedy.

Even when the Psalmist is driven by the experience of life to protest at the injustice of innocence cast down and wickedness exalted, he does not doubt that all will come right in the end. His regret, always temporary, is simply that God's fulfilment of justice seems over-long to the impatient human heart. Yet though the Psalmist's hope be realized eventually, when the righteous prosper and the wicked be punished, there remains the problem that the interim suffering of the righteous is unmerited. This problem is faced in *Isaiah*, Chapters XLIX-LIII, and in the *Book of Job*. The *Book of Job* does not give us an answer; it bids us cease our questioning. *Isaiah* gives an answer without first raising any questioning doubts. In both there is complete faith in God, but the *Book of Job* in raising the question comes nearer to the spirit of the Greek tragedians, while *Isaiah* reaches the greater depth of religious insight or speculation.

The doctrine of "the suffering servant" is, I suppose, the most profound solution offered by religion to the problem of evil. The innocent

<sup>11</sup> *Shakespearean Tragedy*, London: Macmillan, 1904, p. 37.

servant of God suffers for the sins of others, to the end that they may be brought to see their own unworthiness and guilt. And what of justice? Innocent suffering for the good of others is unjust only if it be *imposed* from outside. If the innocent sufferer has himself *chosen* to be the instrument of good, no question of justice arises. *Isaiah*, Chapter LIII, seems to include both ideas:

Yet it pleased the Lord to crush him by disease;  
 To see if his soul would offer itself in restitution, . . .  
 And that the purpose of the Lord might prosper by his hand.<sup>12</sup>

The doctrine of *Isaiah* appears to include the view of the *Book of Job* that God imposes suffering on the innocent in order to test and enhance their goodness, and at the same time it goes farther in making their voluntary submission a means, chosen by God and his servant jointly, for bringing about improvement in others. The suffering is imposed by God, but the servant voluntarily accepts it and takes it upon himself as atonement for the wicked.

And the Lord hath made to light on him  
 The iniquity of us all.  
 He was oppressed, though he humbled himself  
 And opened not his mouth. . . .  
 Yet he bore the sin of many,  
 And made intercession for the transgressors.<sup>13</sup>

Earlier chapters of *Isaiah* take the traditional view that suffering must be punishment for one's own sins. This is to deny that there is any innocent suffering. In the section on "the suffering servant," the prophet acknowledges its existence. Yet it is never allowed to be a *problem*, to raise questions and doubts. As soon as the existence of unmerited evil is recognized, the religious spirit finds in it a heightened goodness and a means to good. The moral order of the universe is not dimmed, but shines with a more brilliant light than before.

The *Book of Job* is different. Here, for once, the problem of evil raises doubt, and no solution is provided. *Job* has been likened to a Greek Tragedy, and especially to *Prometheus Vinctus* both in form and in subject-matter. Certainly it comes nearer to Tragedy than anything else in the Bible. Yet it is not a Tragedy. The effect intended and produced on the reader is quite different.

The mere fact that *Job* is restored to prosperity in the epilogue does

<sup>12</sup> LIII, 10. The italics are, of course, mine. In quoting from the Old Testament, I use the version of *The Holy Scriptures* issued by the Jewish Publication Society of America (Philadelphia: 1917). [Raphael does not distinguish the Unknown Prophet (here) from *Isaiah of Jerusalem* (below)—ED.]

<sup>13</sup> LIII, 6-7, 12.

not matter very much, irrespective of whether we regard this as a later addition or not. After all, the epilogue itself acknowledges that evil done cannot be undone, for it says that Job's relations and friends "bemoaned him, and comforted him concerning all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him,"<sup>14</sup> and this even after God had given him twice what he had before. The *Book of Job* is not a Tragedy, because the grandeur of the hero is deliberately shrunk to nothing before the sublimity of the power he has questioned. Compare Chapter XIII, verses 15–16, with Chapter XLII, verse 6:

Behold, He will slay me; I wait for Him: [or: I have no hope:]<sup>15</sup>  
 But I will argue my ways before Him.  
 This also shall be my salvation,  
 That a hypocrite cannot come before Him.

Here Job is sublime, equally matched in debate with God. But in the end, when God has reminded him of the limitations of human understanding, he says:

Wherefore I abhor my words, and repent,  
 Seeing I am dust and ashes.

One might perhaps say that Job is still sublime if one felt that so bold

<sup>14</sup> XLII, 11.

<sup>15</sup> For the alternative renderings here, cf. the margin of the Revised Version. The American Jewish version follows the inspired rendering of the Authorized Version: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

"I have no hope" translates the reading of the Hebrew text, which literally means "I do not wait (for anything better)." It is traditional to follow the Massoretic reading in the margin, which substitutes for the Hebrew word *lo*, meaning "not," a similarly sounded but differently spelt word meaning "to or for him." (Confusion between these two words occurs several times in the text of the Hebrew Bible.) This gives the meaning, "I wait for him"; and since the verb used seems always to connote waiting *hopefully* and never waiting for anything evil (cf. the philological note on the passage by S. R. Driver and G. B. Gray, *International Critical Commentary* on the *Book of Job*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921, Pt. II, pp. 84–5), there is perhaps some justification for the idea behind the A. V. rendering, "yet will I trust in him," though it cannot be strictly correct.

The reading in the Hebrew text is more what we might expect, and more in the spirit of a tragic hero. But the marginal reading is supported by most of the non-Hebrew ancient versions. In any case, even if the original story, which was not Hebraic, made Job say "I have no hope," the traditional reading expresses the way in which Judaism insisted on adapting it. It is typical of the Old Testament to adapt to the spirit of its own religion material originally gathered from an external source (cf. the Biblical treatment of the story of the Flood); and it is that spirit—not the spirit of its pre-Biblical material—which I am here contrasting with the spirit of Tragedy.

I am indebted to Dr. David Daiches for pointing out to me that the traditional translation, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," depends on a marginal reading, and that the text gives quite a different sense.

a spirit could not acknowledge his nonentity without great effort. Still, the main point is that the result of Job's contest with God shows God superior in every way. Job has demonstrated the truth of God's description of him to Satan:

Hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a whole-hearted and upright man, one that feareth God, and shunneth evil? and he still holdeth fast his integrity, although thou didst move Me against him, to destroy him without cause.<sup>16</sup>

If we think of a contest between Job and Satan, Job is spiritually victorious. But that is not where the interest of the book lies. Job's conflict is in debate with God, and at the end he humbly concedes God's superiority in the debate as well as in power.

Observe, too, that when Job does contend with God, he opposes only his *understanding* to God's justice. There is never any question of opposing his will, of refusing to *accept* the order of the world. He questions its justice but he submits to it willingly. In the very place where Job is most bold, in declaring that he will argue his ways before God, he also acknowledges, with humble acceptance, God's power: "Behold, He will slay me; I wait for Him" (or: "I have no hope"). Job joins the questioning intellect of a Greek with the submissive faith of a Hebrew. The verse matches man with God, in the manner of Greek Tragedy, but at the same time it matches intellectual audacity with submission of the will.<sup>17</sup> In the end, however, Job abases his intellect to an equal depth of submission: "I abhor my words, and repent, seeing I am dust and ashes."

We cannot say that the problem of evil is ignored in the *Book of Job*, nor that it is solved. No solution is given for the intellectual difficulty. We are told that it is a mystery too great for the human understanding to penetrate. The difference between *Job* and Tragedy, therefore, does not lie in different approaches to the problem of evil. Many writers on Tragedy stress the sense of mystery that lurks in the wings of the tragic drama. Tragedy, they tell us, does not try to solve the problem of evil; it merely presents the problem, and leaves it as a mystery. So does the *Book of Job*. Accordingly we cannot say that Biblical religion, unlike Tragedy, *always* assumes that the problem of evil can be solved. For that matter, not all Tragedy leaves the problem as a mystery. Aeschylus seeks a solution in feeling his way to a theology of the kind presupposed in our Bible. Euripides on the other hand tends to seek a solution in a rejection of the gods. Neither is prepared merely to leave the problem as a mystery.

<sup>16</sup> II, 8.

<sup>17</sup> If we could accept the A. V. rendering, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," the contrast between this absolute degree of faith and the accompanying audacity would be itself sublime.

When we turn, however, to the other cause of strain between Tragedy and Biblical religion, their respective attitudes to kicking against the pricks, we find that this is illustrated most forcibly in the *Book of Job*. Job is commended in the epilogue for having spoken of God "the thing that is right," unlike his comforters. He is commended, and they are rebuked, for what is said about the conventional view that all suffering is punishment for sin. But Job is himself rebuked for daring to argue with God:

Shall he that reproveth contend with the Almighty?  
He that argueth with God, let him answer it.

And Job answers:

Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer Thee?  
I lay my hand upon my mouth.<sup>18</sup>

Tragedy glorifies human resistance to necessity, religion praises submission. To put it crudely with Anouilh, the tragic hero says "No" to the forces which oppose and crush him; religion commends resignation. Iphigeneia tries to escape her fate; Jephthah's daughter accepts hers without question. Prometheus defies Zeus; Job lays his hand upon his mouth.

To sum up, the religion of the Bible is inimical to Tragedy, first because it is optimistic and trusts that evil is always a necessary means to greater good, and secondly because it abases man before the sublimity of God. Tragedy on the other hand treats evil as unalloyed evil; it regrets the waste of human worth of any kind, and does not think that innocent suffering can be justified. Secondly, it shows human effort to be sublime, a fit match for the sublimity of nature and nature's gods. If this is true, it will follow that Tragedy is hardly possible against a background of Biblical religion. . . .<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> XL, 2, 4.

<sup>19</sup> [The remainder of the chapter discusses tragedy in Christian Europe; specifically, *King Lear*, *Samson Agonistes*, Corneille's *Polyeucte*, and Racine's *Athalie* and *Phèdre*—ED.]

# Prometheus and Job

by *Gilbert Murray*

. . . It is indisputable that, in regions where the conscience or the social instincts of man are not in control, the ordinary working of the world is non-moral.<sup>1</sup> It is, as far as one can see, totally indifferent to justice. Our ancestors tried to believe in ordeals which would distinguish the innocent from the guilty; but experience seems to show that the sun shines equally on the righteous and the unrighteous: fire burns them, water drowns them, arsenic poisons them both with absolute impartiality. Nay, if one begins to criticize by human standards the moral order implied in a world where no creature lives except by daily inflicting pain and death on others, it is quite easy to come to the conclusion that the world is definitely evil. Most religions indeed condemn this temporal world, but swamp its badness in the alleged infinite goodness of some other: only very few arraign the Ruler of the World for his present tyranny. This, however, is the theme of the *Prometheus*. We are shown the pitiful state of mankind. Zeus had hidden away the means of life<sup>2</sup> from man, just as he had hidden away fire. He had let loose innumerable winged evils; the air and sea are full of them; there is no escaping them. Life is hard and lies always under the shadow of death. And, after all, for reasons good or bad, Zeus has from time to time entertained the idea of destroying man altogether, as a noxious and unhappy beast. That is what he sought when he brought about the Trojan War. That is what he was going to do when Prometheus thwarted him.

So Aeschylus reaches the conception of a supreme Tyrant, the enemy of man, ruling the world, and of a champion of mankind, standing up against him. We have already noticed the scene of his crucifixion upon

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<sup>1</sup> [This excerpt begins slightly before the mid-point of a chapter in which earlier Murray has been discussing the philosophical, political, and religious views of Aeschylus—ED.]

<sup>2</sup> [In a footnote Murray gives the Greek; Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 42—ED.]

the rock. The champion is utterly inferior in strength to Zeus: the gods too are with Zeus, except the Old Dynasty that has long since been cast out to desolation. The only ally of Prometheus is Man himself, Man the creature of a day, utterly strengthless, dreamlike, who can bring no help except his affection and *συμπαθεία*. The true sources of strength that Prometheus has are his immortality and his indomitable will. Zeus can bind him and torture him; he cannot make him die and cannot break his resolution.

*Συμπαθεία* is a stronger word than our "sympathy," just as its Latin equivalent *compassio* is stronger than our "compassion." It means "fellow-suffering" or "suffering together." One of the most sublime of the Stoic doctrines was the *συμπαθεία τῶν ὅλων*, the conception that every joy or pain felt by an individual soul vibrates through the universe, so that with any great martyr or Saviour the whole of life suffers. This idea finds perhaps its earliest expression in one of the songs of the Daughters of Ocean in the *Prometheus*: they suffer with him, the whole world suffers, and the fiercest and wildest of men are heart-sore because of him. . . .<sup>8</sup>

The Daughters of Ocean weep for him; they love him; but why, why was he so mad as to champion such a weak, transitory thing as mankind and expect it to be his ally against the omnipotent? For their own part, they have always lived in piety and obedience to Zeus in their quiet home by the Ocean stream. . . .

We have seen before the enmity of Zeus against mankind, and the crucifixion of the Friend of man. We have here the *sympatheia* or fellow-suffering of all creation with Prometheus, and the utter helplessness of man and his champion against the tyrant God. That, then, is the situation in the *Prometheus Desmótēs*: that is the conflict. It seems at first sight insoluble, and before considering the solution that Aeschylus has actually proposed, it may be as well to look for a moment at some of the other solutions that have been propounded in the great literatures of the world.

I think there can be no doubt that the moral sense of civilized man, or of anything that claims the flattering title of *Homo sapiens* in whatever stage of development, is at times shocked and bewildered by the behaviour of the external world. He is its slave, and it cares nothing for him: its values are not his values; and the more he thinks of the world as alive and acting by conscious quasi-human will, the more profoundly is he shocked. The fires, floods, and famines, the great inevitable miseries of nature, are not things which any good man would think of causing or permitting even against his worst enemies, if he had control over them. The rebellion of certain religions against the

<sup>8</sup> [Murray's quotation of ll. 405-21 and 428-35 have been omitted here; also, immediately below, ll. 526ff.—Ed.]

Ruler of the World, so far as the ordinary run of events can serve as evidence of his character and intentions, is a rebellion of the moral sense not exactly against facts, but against the claim that facts because they are facts must be good. It is to a large extent the protest of the "rebel passion," Pity, and has led to much fine imaginative work. In itself, the rebellion is not a solution of any difficulty; but it often leads to interesting attempts at solving the main problem.

One of the most impressive, no doubt, is the *Book of Job*. The course of thought in *Job*, though often sublime, is not on the whole lucid, a fact which has led critics to conclude that it is a good deal interpolated. But the main lines can be made out. It is a "theodicy," an attempt to "justify the ways of God to man." Its dramatic form, as well as its philosophical substance, is without parallel in our remains of Hebrew literature. And we may remember that some Biblical scholars have thought it was actually inspired by the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus, which the author may have read, or heard about, in Egypt. The book begins with a mythological setting in which the story is represented as the result of a sort of bet upon the part of Satan that, though Job while prosperous is perfectly pious, he can be made to "curse God" if he is sufficiently tormented and afflicted. The Almighty enters into the spirit of this atrocious proposal, and every kind of torment is showered upon the innocent man. It is like torturing your faithful dog to see if you can make him bite you. So much for the mythological prologue. Then comes the real substance of the book. It is a discussion of the just or unjust government of the world. Through most of the book the divine Justice is taken for granted, which seems to imply the conclusion that, since Job is made miserable by Jehovah, he must be wicked. He must deserve all that he gets. This is the view of the Comforters, but Job never admits it. Like the faithful dog, who will never turn against his master, he says "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him,"<sup>4</sup> but he steadfastly refuses to confess to sins that he has not committed or to a general wickedness of which he is not conscious. He cannot see the justice or the reason of his afflictions; he states his innocence and craves a reply. He would like to see the case against him in black and white (xxxi, 35): "Oh that one would hear me! Behold, my desire is that the Almighty should answer me and that mine adversary had written a book."

Elihu the Buzite is thoroughly shocked by this attitude of Job. His belly becomes like wine that has no vent; it is ready to burst with indignation, like new bottles. He undertakes to make an answer. God must be righteous and cannot do wrong. Therefore Job is committing a grave sin in protesting his innocence, and thus attempting to judge the justice of God. "Thinkest thou this to be right, that thou saidst

<sup>4</sup>So the AV: the original is obscure.

My righteousness is more than God's?" He goes on to argue that God owes Job nothing: Job's goodness cannot benefit Him nor Job's wickedness hurt Him. It is exactly the view rejected by Plutarch<sup>5</sup> but re-asserted by certain medieval theologians, that animals have no cause to complain if man tortures them, because he has no duties towards them. On moral grounds this is a pretty miserable answer, yet it is essentially the same as the answer made by Jehovah Himself. "Who is this that darkeneth knowledge? . . . Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof? . . . Whereupon are the foundations fashioned? Or who laid the corner stone thereof when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" Later on, after long insistence on the puny and ephemeral nature of Job, the Almighty comes to the central argument: "Wilt thou disannul My judgment? Wilt thou condemn Me that thou mayest be righteous? Hast thou an arm like God or canst thou thunder with a voice like Him?"

If Plato or Aristotle had been present at this discussion I think they would have felt as explosive as Elihu the Buzite, but on different grounds. They would have pointed out that Jehovah was not answering the real question at all. No one had doubted God's power, it was His justice they had questioned; and His only answer has been to re-assert His power again and again in a storm of magnificent rhetoric, and demand how a worm like Job dares to ask any question at all. God does not show, or even say, that He is righteous by human standards of righteousness; what he does assert is that He is, in Nietzsche's phrase, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*,<sup>6</sup> and that the puny standards by which man judges right and wrong simply do not apply to the power that rules the universe. If God's rule conflicts with human morality, that is because human morality is such a limited thing, not valid beyond particular regions of time and space. It is impertinence in man to expect God to be "righteous." This can be defended as a real and profound answer. But it is one that would have utterly shocked Plato or Aristotle. The democratic Greek instinctively cared more for Law and Justice, *Nόμος* and *Δικαιοσύνη*. The Oriental, accustomed to the rule of a despot or patriarch, cared most for obedience to the supreme Power.

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But what was the solution propounded by Aeschylus himself?<sup>7</sup> We know that it was not the fall of Zeus. The threats of Prometheus are

<sup>5</sup> *De Sollertia Animalium*, and more seriously, *De Esu Carnium*.

<sup>6</sup> ["Beyond good and evil"—Ed.]

<sup>7</sup> [In an omitted section Murray had briefly discussed other "rebel thinkers":

strong, but, as we have already seen, they are all conditional. Zeus must fall unless Prometheus reveals the secret that will save him, and this Prometheus will not reveal except on his own conditions. No threat of torture will move him. His present punishment is not enough, and he is hurled in chains to Tartarus. That is the state of affairs at the end of the *Prometheus Bound*, which was the first play of a tragic trilogy.

The second was called *Προμηθεὺς Διώμενος*, not *Prometheus Unbound*, but *The Unbinding of Prometheus*, since *λιόμενος* is a present participle. The play itself is lost, but there are some twenty references to it in ancient literature, and we can make out something of its plot. There was a Chorus of Titans sympathizing with Prometheus, like the Daughters of Ocean in the *Prometheus Bound*. Among the characters were Gaia, the mother of Prometheus, and Heracles. Now, it was Gaia who revealed to Prometheus the secret on which the fate of Zeus depended. It therefore seems highly probable that she has come in order to be authorized by Prometheus to reveal it to Zeus. It was Heracles who set Prometheus free; he must be there by the will of Zeus in order to do so. The secret is that the son of Thetis will be greater than his father. Zeus had been on the point of making her his bride, but on hearing this oracle he hands her over to a mortal suitor, Pēleus. Thus Zeus is saved: he is not to have a son greater than himself. In return he sets Prometheus free, restores his dignities, and founds in his honour the Festival of the Promethia. This festival seems to have been the subject of the third play, the *Προμηθεὺς Πυρφόρος*, *Prometheus the Fire-bearer*.<sup>8</sup> That, then, is the end of the story. Peace is made on certain terms between the two enemies, and solemnized in a great ritual, as in the *Eumenides*.

Now, here there is a chance of making a bad mistake. In the Hesiodic folk-tale, where the whole story was a contest of wit against power, with no moral issue at stake, the secret was probably merely a trump card. Zeus, whatever his feelings, was compelled to make terms, and Prometheus insisted on pretty stiff ones—his own release and reinstatement, the same for all the Titans, and some sort of survival rights for mankind. And some scholars have attributed this same dé-

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Gnostics, medieval sectaries, and various modern writers, and, at some length, Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*—ED.]

<sup>8</sup> It has often been thought that *πυρφόρος* must have meant "Firebringer" and applied to the first play of the three, describing Prometheus' offence, the bringing of the fire to man. The Scholia, however, tell us definitely that Aeschylus in the *Πυρφόρος* says that Prometheus had been bound for thirty thousand years; it must therefore have been the closing play of the trilogy, not the opening. The foundation of a festival was a common ending for tragedies. In Euripides, who wrote in single plays, it often comes at the end of a single play; in Aeschylus, who wrote in trilogies, it seems to have been kept as a rule for the last play of a trilogy.

nouement, without qualification, to Aeschylus. I think it is clear that they are wrong. Such a mechanical solution is out of tone with Aeschylus' whole treatment, just as it is in tone with that of Hesiod. Even if we had no external evidence I confess that I should feel such an end to the *Prometheus* trilogy to be incredible. The real solution takes us into one of the deepest and most characteristic recesses of the mind of Aeschylus. It is Zeus who repents more than Prometheus.

The evidence for this statement is to be found in other plays, not in the fragments of the *Prometheus*. We shall find in the *Agamemnon* that, as contrasted with all the previous rulers of Heaven, Zeus has a new and extraordinary faculty: the power to think and to learn by suffering. Before Zeus the world was governed by beings who were like blind forces of nature. But with Zeus came something new: what the Greeks called *ξύνεσις* or Understanding. He understood. Euripides in the *Frogs* prays to *Sunesis*, "Understanding"; the Chorus of Huntsmen in the *Hippolytus*, in the midst of their despair, cling to a belief in *Ξύνεστιν τρά*, "some great Understanding": the Old Men in the *Heracles*, more rebellious, ponder how different the world would be if the gods had *ξύνεσις* like men.<sup>9</sup>

Through this power of thought or understanding Zeus changes his way of rule.<sup>10</sup>

Zeus, Zeus, Whate'er He be—  
 If this name He love to hear,  
 This He shall be called of me.  
 Searching earth and sea and air,  
 Refuge nowhere can I find  
 Save Him only, if my mind  
 Would cast off, before it die,  
 The burden of this vanity.

One there was who reigned of old  
 Big with wrath to brave and blast:  
 Lo, his name is no more told!  
 And who followed met at last  
 The Third Thrower and is gone.  
 Only they whose hearts have known  
 Zeus, the Conqueror and the Friend,  
 They shall win their vision's end:

Zeus the Guide, who made man turn  
 Thoughtward, Zeus who did ordain

<sup>9</sup> *Frogs*, 893; *Hippolytus*, 1105; *Heracles*, 655.

<sup>10</sup> *Agamemnon*, 160ff.

Man by suffering shall learn.  
 So the heart of him, again  
 Aching with remembered pain,  
 Bleeds and sleepeth not, until  
 Wisdom comes against his will.  
 'Tis the gift of One by strife  
 Lifted to the throne of life.

What Zeus taught to man he had first practised himself. He came by strife and battle to his throne. He overpowered and imprisoned his adversaries; and then "*aching with remembered pain*," he learned something: something which led him to set free his enemies the Titans, to pardon sinners like Ixion and Orestes, to send Heracles to release Prometheus, and to bring Io at last to peace. Zeus himself is the Saviour.

The key to the understanding of Zeus lies in his healing of Io and his pardon of Orestes. The pardon of Orestes we must deal with later:<sup>11</sup> Io we can consider now.

In the *Prometheus Desmötés* his treatment of Io is like the last infamy of a licentious tyrant. For the traditional tyrant in Greek poetry behaves like the traditional wicked baronet of the English stage. We have already heard Io's story; and lest there should be any doubt as to the impression made by this conduct of Zeus, we must note that the Chorus are almost inarticulate with horror at such *πῆματα, λύματα, δεῖματα*, "sufferings, crimes, and terrors," while Io herself, on hearing her future fate, breaks into inarticulate sobbing, and then threatens to throw herself over the precipice and die. Prometheus bids her think of him. Her torment is comparatively short: he must suffer on, age after age, until Zeus is hurled from his throne. "What!" cries Io, "Can that ever be?" It would be the one thing that could reconcile her to life. Prometheus assures her that it must come; none but Prometheus himself can speak the word by which Zeus might be saved, and it is taken for granted by both Io and Prometheus himself that that word will never be spoken.

Thus we have in this play Zeus appearing as an unredeemed tyrant, hating men, torturing their divine champion, and making women the victims of his lust. Yet the audience might suspect that this was not the whole truth, for several reasons. Not only would they hesitate to expect a thoroughgoing Satanism from Aeschylus; they knew that in the tradition Zeus and Prometheus were, as a matter of fact, reconciled; and they also knew that in an earlier play Aeschylus had already treated the Io story, deepened all its issues, and made of it a mystery tending to the glory of Zeus in spite of all.

<sup>11</sup> [In Chap. VI in Murray's volume—ED.]

In the *Suppliant Women*, many years before the *Prometheus*, the descendants of Io in the fifth generation come back from Egypt, where they were born, to Argos. They claim and receive protection from the Argives as descendants of an Argive princess. Why have they come? Because they are flying across the seas from the lust of Aegyptus' Sons; and the whole play rings with denunciations of the unpardonable sin of the pursuers.

Shall bird be clean, which maketh bird his food?  
Shall man be clean, who doth his lust fulfil  
Against her will, against her father's will,  
On woman? Never more shall such an one,  
Nay, not in death, escape the deed he has done.  
A Zeus is there, not ours, on each bowed head  
Who deals the unchanging judgment of the dead.

"Against her will, against her father's will" . . . that is exactly what Zeus himself did to Io. The daughters of Io "wander in the print of ancient feet," and are actually asking for protection against violation from Zeus, the violator of Io. How is this strange situation to be met?

In the first place, without directly contradicting the legend, Aeschylus seems to deny that there was any lust, any violation. There was *λόγος τις*, "a certain story," "a tradition," telling of such. But the actual birth of Io's son Epaphus was a Virgin Birth, by the laying on of the hand of Zeus. And neither in the *Supplices* nor in the *Prometheus* is there any mention of an actual union between Zeus and the mortal woman.

Next, though the sufferings of Io are not at all minimized, they are treated as a sort of ordeal or preparation, leading towards some conclusion which involves ineffable bliss. One must presume that the end was not to be reached without them; and the end means not only bliss to Io but the birth of a Saviour of the World, who is also the destined liberator of Prometheus. One cannot but be reminded of the passion of the suffering God or Redeemer in various of the mysteries.

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This enables us, so far as such intimacy with a man who has been dead for two thousand years is possible at all, to grasp the main lines of Aeschylus' thought, and the theory by which he tries to answer Job's question.<sup>12</sup> First, Zeus has the power of Thought, the power of Learning by experience, which differentiates him and his rule from all

<sup>12</sup> [Several intervening pages of quotations from *The Suppliant Women (Supplices)* and a discursive footnote have been omitted—ED.]

that has gone before. He has also led man along the road of Thought. He learns and does better. This gives us the interesting theory—not, like Shelley's, of the perfectibility of Man—but of the perfectibility of God. The doctrine recurs in a slightly different form, if I remember rightly, in the famous pessimist philosopher, Von Hartmann,<sup>18</sup> who urges his disciples "To work with God to redeem God." Translated from metaphor into a statement of fact, Aeschylus' theory would mean that this brutal non-moral external world which still dominates Man and shocks his conscience has itself a possibility of evolving towards something more spiritual and more concordant with our higher ideals—a view which would not, I think, be rejected by Bergson.<sup>14</sup>

But there is a second element in the theory also: one which is thrilling as poetry, though in philosophy it may suggest a mere cowardly volte-face. What if there is something quite wrong in the present condemnation of Zeus as he now is? What if Prometheus and Io herself are utterly mistaken, at any rate in their judgement of what seems like his worst action? It is not merely that at present he is new to the throne, and still—as we should put it—in a state of war-psychosis, from which, as he learns, he will recover.<sup>15</sup> Even the things which he is doing now are part of a long-distance plan, inscrutable by our mortal minds and therefore unjudgeable. One can only pray that his desire may be for what we, so far as we understand it, should call good or godlike.

To quote the *Supplices* again (86):

Oh, may the desire of God be indeed of God!  
 Is it not strong in the chase?  
 On all roads with dark issue, a burning rod,  
 It guides man's mortal race.  
  
 It falleth firm, it slippeth not, whatso thought  
 In the brain of Zeus is formed. It is word and deed.  
 Through tangled forest and shadow His paths are wrought,  
 Which none may trace nor read.

Thus we see that Aeschylus has in his mind two speculative answers to the Question of Job, each effective singly but the two still more effective in combination. The world power that he calls Zeus learns and grows. The *élan vital*, as M. Bergson calls it, at first almost blind in its striving, acquires clearer and more definite aims; the striving becomes more intelligent, and at last more spiritual. At the same time,

<sup>18</sup> [Eduard von Hartmann, German philosopher; 1842-1906—Ed.]

<sup>14</sup> [Henri Bergson, French philosopher; 1859-1941—Ed.]

<sup>15</sup> *Prometheus Bound*, 35.

even in its present state, amid all its horrors, the world power is something beyond our comprehension and power of judgement. Though doubtless terribly imperfect even by its own standards, it is not to be fully understood or measured by standards which have been built up to suit the finite and narrow experience of man.

# Expostulation with the Divine: A Note on Contrasting Attitudes in Greek and Hebrew Piety

by *U. Milo Kaufmann*

The Greeks, by and large, did not expostulate with the Divine; the Hebrews did. Oedipus confronts his fate with horror, but he does not dispute its justice with Apollo or Zeus. Orestes, in the *Eumenides*, resolutely denies that he is a lowly supplicant before the Furies, or Athene. He has done what Apollo commanded by way of sacrificial expiation, and he wishes neither to argue with the Furies nor to beg further favors from the gods. His case rests. But in Hebrew tradition, expostulation with the Divine is characteristic. Abraham intercedes at length for Sodom; Jacob begs a favor at Peniel; Moses argues his weaknesses at the burning bush—the same Moses who later throws himself in the breach to save his people by argument and the offered immolation of himself; Job takes it on himself to dispute the dispensations of the natural world with its Maker. The typical reaction of the Hebrew prophets to their divine call needs only to be mentioned.

The list of illustrations could be much prolonged. Among these few mentioned, however, there are two pairs of stories adequate to our purpose: Job *agonistes* and Oedipus *agonistes*, and Moses on Mount Sinai and Orestes in Athens. The first two comprise a convenient pairing for scrutiny since both are dramatic assaults upon the riddle of human suffering; the other two present strikingly divergent approaches to the problem of how preternatural wrath may be averted by argument.

We may first note similarities between the Book of Job and *Oedipus Rex* before turning to the significant divergence between them. Both plays are set against a cosmic backdrop; both succeed in trammeling

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up most of the major human questions in the net of their dramatic conflicts. The Prologue to Job serves to answer beforehand the major questions which the later philosophical disputation raises (though this fact is ordinarily overlooked), and it is true that the answer provided is relevant to the later questions only in a formal sense. We know why Job is made to suffer, whether or not Job himself does. He is being tested. The central question of the drama, viewed as a whole, is that of the possibility of disinterested religion: "Does Job serve God for nought?" And the answer is apparent; it is a resounding negative. But though within the structure of the drama Job's questions receive the answer that God is carefully reining in the process of his suffering for a considered purpose and is protecting Job's life, the questions insist on soaring out of the dramatic framework and calling for answers of a different kind—answers which man appears ontologically unqualified to grasp.

In Job the cosmic framework of the story testifies that God is in control of his world, and it provides Job's questionings with a cosmic sounding board. In *Oedipus Rex* the cosmic framework suggests that it is fate which is in control of the world. While the gods have the mastery of fate in the sense that they can anticipate it and prepare for it and report on it to others (as Apollo warned Oedipus through an oracle), there is no hint that they can avert it. The final mystery in Job can be phrased in the question: Why does God allow what he does? (Or why does he stoop to taking Satan's taunt?) In *Oedipus Rex*, the final mystery can be expressed in the question: Why does fate decree what it does? Zeus and Apollo appear, indeed, as the ancillary powers which ensure that fate will work itself out. W. K. C. Guthrie observes of Apollo that "Under his most important and influential aspect may be included everything that connects him with law and order. . . . His advice was 'Know thyself' and 'Nothing too much.'"<sup>1</sup> But in the last analysis, neither Apollo nor Zeus determines what order is to be followed. The gods, like men, are by and large content to accept the status quo—things as they just happen to be.

Because fate plays the role it does in *Oedipus Rex*, dictating the ways both of God and men, the sustaining element in the plot differs from the sustaining element in Job. There is genuine dramatic suspense in Job; how *will* the protagonist respond to his testing? But in *Oedipus Rex*, once Teiresias announces that Oedipus is the "land's pollution," it is understood that his fate is sealed. From that point, when the audience discerns the end which the protagonist refuses to recognize, the play is a tissue of irony. A sealed destiny is, of course, the perfect anvil against which the dramatist can hammer out ironies.

<sup>1</sup> *The Greeks and Their Gods* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 183.

The divine word comes to Oedipus long before the action of the play begins. He had originally fled to Thebes from Corinth because the oracle foretold the horrors which lay ahead of him. His subsequent life is the *odyssey* of a person fleeing a pursuing destiny. In Job the divine word functions quite differently. There, setting aside the Prologue (of which Job is unaware), the whole movement of the drama is forward—toward the divine disclosure. Job implores God for answers, but God refrains from speaking. Oedipus flees the divine word; Job pursues it.

When God's reply does come, it momentarily seems totally irrelevant to Job's questions. No specific answers are given. God proceeds to cow Job into submission with a recitation of his mighty works in nature. He speaks out of the whirlwind, and there is good reason to believe that his speaking in the midst of the storm is a highly dramatic presentation of what Job might have learned had he taken his questions into nature and then reflected at length on the meaning of the might displayed by the elements. The fact that Yahweh's several discourses are entirely taken up with a cataloguing of the creatures whose ways he superintends lends further weight to the suggestion that actually what the dramatist is implying here is that his protagonist, faced with insoluble questions concerning the morality of God, finds his peace in a mystical confrontation with nature which assures him that the Creator-God behind it is powerful and trustworthy, though his ways are past finding out.

We must admit at once, however, that the solace to be found in nature is relevant to the protagonist's problems solely because of his knowledge of a covenanted relationship with God. Many have turned to nature and found not answers but further questions. Presumably Job could approach nature with the category of "creator" in mind and could find comfort in the revelation of power there disclosed, because he enjoyed that covenanted relationship to God which revealed God as living and as favorably disposed to his creatures.

We may now take up the basic point of this study, the matter of expostulation with the Divine. It can hardly be said strongly enough that all Job's protestations aimed at Yahweh presuppose that he has some standard by which he can call God to account. This standard, of course, is none other than that implicit in the religion of Israel as the covenanted community. So when Job says,

But I would speak to the Almighty,  
and I desire to argue my case with God. . .  
(13:3)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> This and all following quotations from Job are taken from the Revised Standard Version (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1952).

we may be sure that his confidence stems from unshaken conviction about what God in fact is. Especially is this the case when we recall that shortly before this he had said,

But how can a man be just before God?  
 If one wished to contend with him,  
 one could not answer him once in  
 a thousand times.

(9:2b-3)

If later he does dare to contend with him, it is because he is sure that God "convicts" himself out of his own mouth. He is judging God by God.

Job's exhortations are some of the mightiest words that have been put in the mouth of a dramatic figure. He presents his case fearlessly:

How many are my iniquities and my sins?  
 Make me know my transgression and my sin.  
 Why dost thou hide thy face,  
 and count me as thy enemy?  
 Wilt thou frighten a driven leaf  
 and pursue dry chaff?

(13:23-25)

Small wonder that God has occasion to say in his reply,

Will you even put me in the wrong?  
 Will you condemn me that you may be justified?  
 Have you an arm like God,  
 and can you thunder with a voice like his?

(40:8-9)

The relationship between these questions and their answer is, of course, a sublime *non sequitur*. Job may not have an arm like God's, but he has dared to put God in the wrong, for the unassailably reason that God is not living up to his promise!

At this point we come to a crux of the play. The dramatist is obviously writing in the context of the Covenant. But Job's questions seem to arise, as we may imagine they did for many a Hebrew, from a particular understanding of the Covenant. It is important here to introduce the historical note that the Book of Job was probably written at the time of the Babylonian exile, when the understanding of the Covenant was undergoing revision. Martin Buber says, "Job's question comes into being as the question of a whole generation about the sense of its historic fate. Behind this 'I,' made so personal here, there still stands the 'I' of Israel."<sup>3</sup> And just as the historical Hebrew had

<sup>3</sup> Martin Buber, *The Prophetic Faith*. A Harper Torchbook (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1960), p. 187.

to question his notions of what the Covenant meant for Israel as a historical entity, Job had to question his easy identification of prosperity with divine favor and of adversity with divine disapproval. Perhaps it is not quite accurate to say that he had to, since his flaw is the inability to see beyond such identifications. Certainly the weakness is a most difficult one to avoid when one's eschatology provides for no trans-history when accounts can be made right. But Job's thinking turns only with the greatest reluctance, and only momentarily, to the idea that justice can be worked out in this way. He relinquishes the hope almost as soon as it is uttered.

For I know that my Redeemer lives,  
 and at last he will stand upon the earth;  
 and after my skin has been destroyed,  
 then without my flesh I shall see God,  
 whom I shall see on my side,  
 and my eyes shall behold, and not another.  
 My heart faints within me!

(19:25-27)

Because he is not able to consider in any sustained fashion the possibility that God need not rectify accounts in history, Job is driven to believe that the God he knows must be using historical existence to bring his purposes to perfection. And in light of this conviction Job's questions arise. (That the conviction was shared by the writer or the editor of the play is testified to by the stark gratuities of the Epilogue, when Job is reinstated as a grand mogul for the sake of historical equity.)

Because Job supposes that the God of the Covenant is a God who makes all right within history, he expostulates. His expostulation stems then, we see, from three presuppositions about God. God is; he means well to his creatures; his intention must be implemented in history. Job's plight would be meaningless without the first two presuppositions. (And it might be observed that it is on these issues that Archibald MacLeish's *J. B.* diverges from its biblical prototype. "J. B." is a milquetoast beside Job. His questionings and defiances seem strangely flat because his bitter experiences have no unflinching faith against which to collide. He is addressing no real God.) The third presupposition is peculiarly organic to the Book of Job as tragedy. For had Job not taken this as part of his position, he might have seen beyond the clouds that so completely obscured the landscape of his argument.

In *Oedipus Rex* the protagonist scrupulously avoids taking issue with the gods, and the reasons are not hard to find. When the chorus tells Oedipus that since Apollo had announced what must be done to cleanse the city, he was obliged to disclose who the guilty man was. Oedipus answers:

Right; but to put compulsion on the Gods  
against their will—no man can do that.<sup>4</sup>

The Hebrew would certainly have agreed that the Divine was not subject to persuasion against his will, but the Covenant allowed him to believe that God's apparent will in the immediate moment had to be understood and qualified by his will as expressed in an earlier contract. The Hebrew felt free to put compulsion of a sort on God. How else can one explain, for example, the audacity attributed to Jacob in the story of his wrestling at Peniel: "But Jacob said, 'I will not let you go, unless you bless me'" (Gen. 32:26b)?

When Oedipus learns beyond doubt that he is the accursed party implicated in the oracle, he blinds himself and goes on to note Apollo's role in the tragedy—but his restraint is significant:

It was Apollo, friends, Apollo,  
that brought this bitter bitterness, my  
sorrows to completion.  
But the hand that struck me  
was none but my own.  
Why should I see  
whose vision showed me nothing sweet to see?  
(ll. 1329-35)

This is all he has to say about Apollo's involvement, though it may well be that in blinding himself he is expressing a noble disdain of the sun god's cruelty in letting him discover his fate bit by bit. Blinded, he need never look again on the sun or the world it illuminates.

With Oedipus' restraint may be compared the abandon of Job:

Oh, that I knew where I might find him,  
that I might come even to his seat!  
I would lay my case before him  
and fill my mouth with arguments.  
I would learn what he would answer me,  
and understand what he would say to me.  
Would he contend with me in the greatness of  
his power?  
No; he would give heed to me.

<sup>4</sup> All quotations from *Oedipus Rex* and *The Eumenides* are cited with line numbers from *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, edited in four volumes by David Grene and Richard Lattimore (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959). The quotation above represents lines 280-281. [Grene's translation of *Oedipus the King* copyright 1942, 1954 by the University of Chicago; Lattimore's translation of *The Eumenides* copyright 1953 by the University of Chicago. Used by permission of the University of Chicago Press—Ed.]

There an upright man could reason with him,  
and I should be acquitted for ever by  
my judge.

(23:3-7)

It is this presumptuousness of unshakable faith which is to be seen as a distinguishing mark of Hebrew piety. The character of God was known apart from appearances. He could be trusted.

In Greek religion, while devotion might be given the gods, trust tended to be an austere confidence in fate as a regulative agency abstracted from deity. Furthermore, the gods were more immediately related to the world of appearances, a fact which made difficult any appeal to a compassion and graciousness superior to that evident in the world of nature. How could Apollo, worshiped as the god of the sun, be asked to alter fate for a human, when he was himself subject to the fated regularities of the natural order?

*The Eumenides*, when compared with Moses' intercession for his people on Mount Sinai, offers several further interesting contrasts between Greek and Judaic attitudes upon expostulation with the Divine. I make this pairing since both treat of the averting of superhuman wrath through argument. Significantly, however, while in the Hebrew story God's wrath is turned aside by the intercession of mere man, in *The Eumenides* the wrath of the Furies is averted only by the intervention of the gods, and expostulation by Orestes is not among the reasons for that intervention. Apollo, as god of order and justice, takes it upon himself to help Orestes because of his own involvement in Orestes' crime. After urging Orestes to flee to Pallas' citadel in Athens, Apollo explains,

Thus  
you will be rid of your afflictions, once for all.  
For it was I who made you strike your mother down.

(ll. 82-4)

Later, when the Furies find Orestes at Athene's temple, Orestes protests,

I have been beaten and been taught. I understand  
the many rules of absolution, where it is right  
to speak and where be silent. In this action now  
speech has been ordered by my teacher, who is wise.

(ll. 276-9)

Even this expostulation with the Furies, he implies, would be unthinkable had he not been given specific warrant by Apollo. He goes on:

The stain of blood dulls now and fades upon my hand.  
My blot of matricide is being washed away.  
When it was fresh still, at the hearth of the god,  
Phoebus,  
this was absolved and driven out by sacrifice  
of swine. . . .

(ll. 280-4)

The sacrifice, ordered by Phoebus Apollo, when duly executed gives Orestes the prerogative of claiming absolution, but he does not for a moment consider arguing his point with the Furies on the basis of its intrinsic merits. He has no righteous arbiter beyond both Furies and gods to whom he might appeal the case. So the Furies can say:

Neither Apollo nor Athene's strength must win  
you free, save you from going down forgotten,  
without  
knowing where joy lies anywhere inside your  
heart,  
blood drained, chewed dry by the powers of  
death, a wraith, a shell.  
You will not speak to answer, spew my challenge  
away?

(ll. 299-303)

Orestes has no answer.

Some lines later, after Athene's appearance, Orestes does break silence to explain his presence. He is not there, he says, to beg or argue for mercy:

I am  
no supplicant, nor was it because I had a stain  
upon my hand that I sat at your image.

(ll. 444-6)

He closes his brief autobiographic recitation with these words:

This is my case. Decide if it be right or wrong.  
I am in your hands. Where my fate falls, I  
shall accept.

(ll. 468-9)

But the statement of his case has scarcely been expostulation or argument—rather, it is a declaration of his conformity to the god's urgings—and the resignation of his final utterance brings into focus a basic distinction in attitudes between Jew and Greek.

In the debate which decides the fate of Orestes, Orestes is only

auditor and spectator. The adversaries are Apollo and Athene on one side, and the Furies on the other, and the decision is effected by a most curious combination of balloting, threat, bribery, sophistry, and reason. In view of the cosmic implications of the outcome, one is perhaps entitled to view the decision as a victory of civilized attitudes over the irrational vitalities, but it is nonetheless significant that the victory is scarcely won by reason. One cannot help feeling that Athene's threat concerning her access to Zeus' thunderbolts is the strongest point in her brief. Her words are ironic:

I am the only god  
who knows the keys to where his thunderbolts  
are locked.  
We do not need such, do we? Be reasonable. . . .  
(ll. 827-9)

The last exhortation is a *tour de force* of sophistry. Reason has nothing to do with the point at hand. One cannot help suspecting that this victory over irrational vitalities through threat and bribery points up a major weakness inhering in the case of the Greeks for metaphysical optimism. Reason cannot vanquish unreason without using the resources of unreason, in Sophocles' presentation, so the conquest is in one sense a victory for unreason. Do not pursue Orestes with vengeance, Athene implies, or I will revenge him in turn with Zeus' thunderbolts. The ultimate contest, in principle, is between brute force as exercised by the gods and brute force as exercised by the Furies; and since the former is greater, the Furies are faced down. On the level of abstraction, the issue might be understood in terms of the inability of the Greek mind completely to disengage the rationality behind the cosmos from the ambiguities of the natural order. Again we touch on the evidence that the Greek gods were fragmented facets of that countenance which the great goddess, Nature, turned to man. The concept that beyond nature there is a rationality which can secure its ends independent of the ambiguous instruments which nature furnishes—a rationality which can afford to love when natural justice calls for vengeance, which dares to woo while the situation seems to demand the dispatch of force—this concept is alien to the Greek mind. It may be that the Greek did not glimpse all the latent meanings of the world as a *derivative* order of being. Falling short of the Hebrew idea of creation, the Greek does not find gods sufficiently detached from the tainted instruments of vitality and force to offer satisfying arbitration in historical circumstances. Athene's use of threat and bribery is the case in point.

When we turn from the ambiguities of Orestes' trial (settled, as we have seen, quite without any element of expostulation or argument

on his part), to the myth of Moses' intercession on Mount Sinai, we find ourselves breathing a different atmosphere. The peaks of Mount Olympus and Mount Sinai very clearly do not penetrate into the same heaven. Here is the description of Moses' first intercession:

... And the **Lord** said to Moses. "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people; now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; but of you I will make a great nation."

But Moses besought the **Lord** his God, and said, "O **Lord**, why does thy wrath burn hot against thy people, whom thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, 'With evil intent did he bring them forth, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth?' Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou didst swear by thine own self, and didst say to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it for ever.'" And the **Lord** repented of the evil which he thought to do to his people.

(Exod. 32:9-14)

The first half of Moses' argument almost staggers one with its presumption. Here is man daring to call God on the count that he must guard his reputation among men! But clearly Moses supposes that his God is passionately concerned that men think of him as just and holy, rather than merely as powerful. The grounds of Moses' presumption are evident in the second half of his argument; he calls God's attention to his Covenant with the Patriarchs. And this two-pronged argument is sufficient to change God's mind. That God had been ready from the beginning to have his mind changed is suggested by the charming bit, "... now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them. . . ." The entreaty with its implicit alternatives is an open invitation for Moses to stay with God and fill the breach between him and the people. Indeed, one might hazard the interpretation that the real freight of the story is the pointing up of the merits of Moses. God does not accrue particular glory in the circumstance, while Moses does.

The second incident of intercession takes a different turn. Moses has descended from the mount, found the golden calf being worshiped, and announced his plans to go up to the Lord again to make atonement:

... So Moses returned to the **Lord** and said, "Alas, this people have sinned a great sin; they have made for themselves gods of gold. But now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray thee,

out of thy book which thou hast written." But the Lord said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. . . ." (Exod. 32:31-33)

Moses' solicitude is curious in one respect, for God had already repented of his planned vengeance, a vengeance contemplated before Moses descended from Sinai and saw for himself what the Israelites had so quickly stooped to. But Moses has returned to the Lord in the role of priest. Atonement must be made to confirm the Lord in his repentance. Before ascending the mount, Moses says, "And now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin." The offering of himself as a sacrifice is not really expostulation. Yet one suspects that Moses' noble proposal springs from the same confidence which prompted his earlier argumentation. Just as the God of the Covenant would not destroy his whole people and abnegate his contract, so he would not destroy Moses and abnegate his earlier agreement that, through Moses, the people would hear his words delivered on the mount (compare Exod. 19:8-9) and that Moses' reports would be believed forever. Had Moses been slain on the mount, his own purity and authority would quite naturally have been suspect. At any rate, Moses exercises a license in conversation with the Divine which is foreign to Greek piety.

It is not difficult to bring into focus those elements in the Hebrew conception of the Divine which encouraged such license. The Hebrew very plainly regarded Yahweh as a trustworthy personality, the arbiter of that providence which is also fate. The Epistle of James, which in several other respects presents Old Testament emphases to the young church as a counterpoise to emphases of the New, gives what amounts to a concise statement of this Hebrew view of God:

... Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

(Jas. 1:17)

This is the God of steadfast, covenant-keeping love, a God who can be argued with when occasion calls for that dialectic which has its ultimate value not in changing God's mind but in fixing man's mind upon the sure grounds of his confidence.

By way of brief summary, we return to a basic divergence between Job and *Oedipus Rex*. Oedipus fled the divine word, while Job pursued it. Job could afford to be so confident, so intent on his pursuit, because in that Hebrew piety which he shared with his dramatist-maker there was present the fundamental conviction that experiences with the

divine word had been uniformly to man's ultimate, if not immediate, benefit. If the critic must stop when confronted with the mystery of the manifest divergence in attitude, the man of faith is entitled to look beyond the mystery to the special history to which the Hebrew unrelentingly pointed as the basis for his claims.

# The Metrical Structure of Job

by Edward J. Kissane

It is not my purpose to give here a detailed exposition of the principles of Hebrew poetry, but merely to explain the principles on which the text of the different poems is divided into verses and strophes in the present work. Many points of Hebrew metrics are still in dispute, and no good purpose would be served by the application to the text of principles not generally accepted; but the researches of scholars during the past half-century have resulted in a large measure of agreement on the essential points, and the doubts which remain are concerned with details of comparatively minor importance.

The points on which there is substantial agreement are:

- i. The unit of Hebrew poetry is the verse, not the stichos or line.
- ii. The verse is divided into two or three equal or unequal parts by caesuras; in other words, the verse is composed of two or three stichoi or lines.
- iii. There is a certain balance of thought between the stichoi of which the verse is composed.

Since the time when Lowth in his *De Sacra Poesi Hebraeorum* (1753) laid the foundations of the study of Hebrew poetry, it has been customary to speak of this last feature as *Parallelism*, which is distinguished into three classes: *Synonymous*, *Antithetic* and *Synthetic*. But the last is not, strictly speaking, parallelism at all, since the second member of the verse merely serves to complete the thought of the first. Hence modern scholars prefer to speak of *balance of thought* rather than parallelism as the essential feature. This balance of thought affects the expression, and sometimes results in parallelism.

But whether we call it "balance of thought" or "parallelism," it is obvious that it cannot exist unless the verse consists of at least two members. A stichos or line cannot stand alone. The simplest verse

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must have at least two parts, which are inseparable. It follows that the metrical unit must always correspond to the sense unit. The end of the verse means also a break in the thought.

#### METRICAL FORMS

The metrical system of Job is not uniform. The greater part is composed of verses of two equal parts, each consisting of three significant words (or accents). But a long poem written throughout in this meter tends to become monotonous, and the poet secures variety by altering the length of the stichoi, and by the occasional use of triplets (verses of three stichoi) instead of couplets. The following are the different verse-forms to be found in the book:

a) 2 : 2. As the caesura is essential for the balance of thought or parallelism, and the simplest clause consists of at least two significant words (subject and predicate), it follows that the simplest form of verse is one which contains four words, divided into two equal parts. As each significant word has an accent, this meter is usually referred to as a verse of four accents or beats, or a tetrameter. This form of verse is comparatively rare; but there are some examples in Job, at least if we follow the Massoretic pointing;<sup>1</sup> for example:

That Thou shouldst vi'sit him every mo'rning,  
Te'st him at every mo'ment. (vii. 18.)

Why doth thy hea'rt car'ry thee away?  
And why do thine ey'es ro'll? (xv. 12.)

I will sho'w thee, hea'ken to me,  
And that which I have se'en I will rel'ate. (xv. 17.)

In the first example, there are only four words in the Hebrew; in the other examples, there are six words to each verse, but in each line or stichos, one word, according to the Massoretic pointing, is unaccented.

b) 2 : 3. The form 2 : 3 or five beats or accents with caesura after the second, is also comparatively rare. But the occurrence of the form elsewhere warns us that it is hazardous to assume that the instances which occur in Job are due to the corruption of the text. We have an example in xxvi. 5 :

The Re'phaim tre'mble,  
Bene'ath the wate'rs and the inhabi'tants thereof,

<sup>1</sup> [The traditional text of the Hebrew Scriptures, called the Massoretic Text, was prepared by early rabbinical scholars, who furnished it with vowel signs (there are no vowel *letters* in Hebrew), accents, and other marks, to indicate pronunciation, punctuation, and chant rhythms—Ed.]

which critics expand to the normal 3 : 3 meter by emendation, thereby distorting the sense of the passage. But the same form occurs in ix. 29, where there is no reason to suspect corruption:

It is I' that should be found in the wro'ng,  
Wh'y should I lab'our in va'in?

c) 3 : 2. This is one of the best-known forms of Hebrew meter. It has received the special name of *Qinah rhythm* because of its use in Lamentations; but its use is not confined to dirges, and it is of frequent occurrence in poems of a different character (e.g. Ps. xxiii.), as well as a variation in poems whose normal meter is 3 : 3. In Job we have many examples:

It is lo'nger than the ea'rth in mea'sure,  
And wi'der than the se'a. (xi. 9.)

How lon'g will ye ve'x my so'ul?  
And cru'sh me with wo'rds? (xix. 1.)

They se'nd forth their yo'ung ones like a flo'ck,  
And their chi'ldren da'nce. (xxi. 11.)

d) 3 : 3. The form 3 : 3 may be considered the characteristic meter of the book, and is the commonest meter in Hebrew poetry generally. Examples:

Bene'ath his ro'ots shall dr'y up,  
And abo've his fo'liage shall wi'ther. (xviii. 16.)

And no'w I am beco'me their so'ng,  
And I a'm a bywo'rd to the'm. (xxx. 6.)

The fact is so evident as to need no further emphasis, and many critics go so far as to claim that any other form that is found is the result of textual corruption. But there is a growing tendency to recognize the fact that the Hebrew poet allowed himself considerable freedom, and varied the monotony by verses of a different rhythm.

e) 4 : 3, 3 : 4, and 4 : 4. Scholars are somewhat reluctant to admit the existence of a verse of longer form than 3 : 3. But there is no intrinsic reason why we should exclude lines of four accents. These forms are to be found elsewhere, and the number of instances in Job is so great that the supposition of corruption in every case is most improbable. For example:

4 : 4. Per'ish the da'y on whi'ch I was bo'rn,  
And the ni'ght which sa'id: a ma'n is conce'ived!  
(iii. 3.)

4 : 3. Sma'll and gre'at, the're are the sa'me,  
And the se'rvant is fre'e from his ma'ster. (iii. 19.)

The form 3 : 4 like 2 : 3 is comparatively rare, and sometimes it is possible to divide the second member into two, thus forming a triplet (3 : 2 : 2). But there are some instances in which the form 3 : 4 appears definitely established:

Surely, thi's was the dwe'lling of a wic'ked man,  
And thi's the pla'ce of one who kne'w not Go'd. (xviii. 21.)

Will it be we'll when He shall put yo'u to the te'st?  
As one dece'iveth me'n will ye dece'ive Hi'm? (xiii. 9.)

I have enumerated the different forms of verse which are to be found in Job in common with the rest of Hebrew poetry to show how unscientific it is to try to fit the verses into a single rigid system. Sometimes it is not difficult to expand a line of two accents into one of three, or to reduce a line of four accents to one of three; all that is required is to accent a word which is usually unaccented, or to join two words under a single accent. But sometimes more drastic changes are required, namely the addition or omission of a word. It is much safer, when there are no other grounds for suspecting corruption, to adhere to the accentuation of the Massoretes, and to assume that the Hebrew poet felt free to vary the meter as the apt expression of this thought required.

#### TRIPLETS

Sometimes the unit of thought cannot be expressed in the normal verse of two stichoi, and the poet adds a third member to form a "triplet" or verse of three stichoi. Some critics have an unreasonable prejudice against this form of verse. Duhm and Hölscher, for instance, arrange all the poems in verses of two members, and any line which refuses to fit into the system has to be discarded.<sup>2</sup> Dhorme also (p. cxlviii, note 2) refuses to admit the existence of triplets. He prefers to call the combination "a verse followed by a half-verse." But this is largely a question of terminology. If the three clauses form a single unit of thought, it is more logical to call the group a single verse. Such triplets are to be found in all classes of poetry. Psalm xlvi., for example, is composed almost entirely of triplets, and the form is particularly frequent in the Prophets. Of the seven verses in the first two strophes of Job four are triplets, and they are to be found at irregular

<sup>2</sup> [For the various scholarly works referred to by Kissane, see his Bibliography (lx-lxiv)—ED.]

intervals throughout the book, but particularly at the end of a strophe.

The length of the lines of a triplet presents all the variations which are to be found in the couplet, i.e., each stichos may consist of two, three, or four significant words or accents. The simplest form 2 : 2 : 2 is found only twice:

My spi'rit is destro'yed,  
My da'ys spe'nt,  
The gra've my lo't. (xvii. 1.)

My da'ys have pa'ssed,  
My pla'ns are plu'cked out,  
The de'sires of my he'art. (xvii. 11.)

Many critics endeavor to reduce these verses to the normal form 3 : 3, but none of the emendations suggested is an improvement on the present text.

As a general rule, the arrangement of the Massoretic text may be trusted. The third line is so closely connected with the other two in sense that together they form a single thought-unit. But there are some instances where two successive triplets have been written and accented as couplets, and *vice versa*. For example, xxix. 15-17 is arranged in the Massoretic text as follows:

- 15 I was eyes to the blind,  
And I was feet to the lame;
- 16 And I was a father to the poor,  
And the cause of one I knew not I examined;
- 17 And I broke the jaws of the wicked,  
And from his teeth I plucked the prey.

Two thoughts are expressed here: Job's kindness to the needy, and his protection of the rights of the weak against the strong. In structure and in meaning 16a is connected with 15, while 16b introduces the new thought which is developed in 17, Job's intervention in the law-courts to protect the weak against the strong. The verses should be written as two triplets.<sup>8</sup>

Sometimes the converse is the case, and the triplets of the Massoretic text are the result of corruption of a passage which was originally in couplets. Thus, x. 15, 17, and 22 in the present text are triplets; but in each case the looseness of the connection between the third clause and the other two points to corruption. In the case of 22 the Greek supplies the missing line; in the case of the other two, the couplet is obtained by combining 15c and 17c. Similarly, the text of xxiv. 12-16

<sup>8</sup> Other examples of the same kind are v. 20-22; xi. 5-6; xii. 25 (?); xxix. 21-23; xxx. 3b-4; xxxix. 20-21.

is written throughout in triplets; but it is generally admitted that, at least in some cases, this is the result of corruption, and the verses were originally couplets.<sup>4</sup>

At other times, the want of connection between the third stichos and the other two may lead to the suspicion that the original text had two couplets, one line of which has been lost. We have examples of this in x. 3; xxviii. 28; xxxviii. 41. The criterion must always be: the verse (whether two or three stichoi) must form a single unit of thought.

### STROPHES

We now come to one of the most disputed questions in the domain of Hebrew poetry. Are the units of poetry (verses) grouped into larger sections of *regular length*? It is obvious that, as there are paragraphs in prose, there must be sense-divisions in poetry likewise; and some scholars call all such groups of verses—no matter how irregular in length—strophes. Thus, Peters divides Job's introductory speech into eleven "strophes," namely, three of three verses each, seven of two verses each, and one of a single verse; but there is no regularity in the occurrence of the two-verse and three-verse groups. Some modern critics deny that there is any regularity in the length of the sense-divisions in the poems of Job, and therefore deny the existence of strophes in the strict sense. Thus Dhorme confesses (*op. cit.* p. cl) that he had to give up his original intention of dividing the poems into verses and regular strophes; and Budde regards the division into strophes as "unproven" and "improbable" (p. viii).

On the other hand, another group of scholars regards regular strophic arrangement as quite as essential as the division into verses, and it is the unnatural and arbitrary character of the systems in vogue that has produced the scepticism of men like Dhorme and Budde. . . .<sup>5</sup>

The strophic system adopted in the present work is much simpler and more natural. It is based on no abstruse and recondite principles; it is merely the application of the fundamental law that the verse is the unit of thought, and the strophe, like the paragraph in prose, consists of a group of verses which develop the same thought. If we divide the poems of the book of Job in accordance with this principle we get the following results:

1. A Strophe may consist of three, four, five, six or seven verses.
2. Each poem (or speech) has a regular strophic arrangement which may be different from that of the preceding or the following.

<sup>4</sup> Other examples: xix. 28-29; xx. 23 (?); xxiv. 22; xxxi. 27 (?); xxxvi. 11, 16.

<sup>5</sup> [Two paragraphs omitted, together with citations. One group of critics insist on absolutely regular two-verse strophes. Others propose intricately varied but symmetrical patterns of verses within strophes—Ed.]

3. The strophic arrangement of a poem follows either of two patterns: either a) the strophes are all of the same length, or b) the strophes are "odd and even," that is, the alternate strophes are one verse longer or shorter.

There is little in these results which should occasion surprise. If there are long and short paragraphs in prose, there is no reason why we should, like Bickell and Duhm, restrict the poet to strophes of two verses. It is a question of fact which every reader can test for himself: does the break in the sense occur after two, or three, or more verses? Similarly, it is not unnatural to find a special strophic arrangement for each poem; for each speech forms an independent unit.

The division into strophes of equal length is a very natural one, and was probably the general rule in the case of lyric poetry, and was necessary if the poem was intended to be sung to a definite tune. In the few cases where the strophic division is guaranteed by the recurrence of a refrain as in Is. ix.-x. 4, Ps. xlvi., lvi., lix., the strophes are all of equal length. The same is true of the Alphabetic poems like Lam. i.-iii., Ps. ix-x., cxix., where each group of verses begins with a different letter. Unfortunately, in many instances, the strophic system of the poem has been obscured by corruption.

The alternation of "odd and even" strophes is the one result which is somewhat unexpected. I have found only one example elsewhere; namely, the poem in Isaias li. 1-8 which has strophes of four and three verses alternately. But of the existence of this metrical scheme in the book of Job there seems to be no doubt; it is sufficient to examine Job's speeches in chapters iii., vi.-vii. to be convinced of this. The "odd and even" strophes occur in three forms: strophes of three and four, five and six, and six and seven verses, alternately.

### *The Strophic System of the Book*

#### A) THE DIALOGUE

Job's introductory Speech consists of strophes of four and three verses, alternately.<sup>6</sup> In the Dialogue proper, his reply to each of the three friends has its own special strophic system; his reply to Eliphaz consists of strophes of six and seven verses, alternately; his reply to Bildad, of strophes of six verses throughout, and his reply to Sophar of five and six verses, alternately. The Speeches both of Eliphaz and Sophar

<sup>6</sup> [Kissane means *three* and *four*; cf. pp. 13f. of his translation. For criticism of his scheme, see articles by Patrick W. Skehan: "Strophic Patterns in the Book of Job," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 23 (1961), 125-42; "Job's Final Plea (Job 29-31) and the Lord's Reply (Job 38-41)," *Biblica*, 45 (1964), 51-62—Ed.]

have strophes of five verses each, that of Bildad strophes of three verses.

Job (introductory speech) . . . . .	4 : 3 : 4
Eliphaz . . . . .	5 : 5 : 5
Job's reply to Eliphaz . . . . .	6 : 7 : 6
Bildad . . . . .	3 : 3 : 3
Job's reply to Bildad . . . . .	6 : 6 : 6
Sophar . . . . .	5 : 5 : 5
Job's reply to Sophar . . . . .	5 : 6 : 5
Poem on Wisdom (xxviii.) . . . . .	5 : 5 : 5

### B) SPEECHES OF ELIHU

If we are to trust the introductory formulae, the Elihu section consists of four Speeches which begin at xxxii. 6, xxxiv. 1, xxxv. 1 and xxxvi. 1, respectively. But both subject-matter and strophic arrangement indicate that the first speech has two distinct parts (xxxii. 6-12 and xxxiii) while the fourth has three (xxxvi. 1-21, xxxvi. 22-xxxvii. 13, and xxxvii. 14-24).

First Speech (section a) . . . . .	3 : 3 : 3
" " (section b) . . . . .	5 : 5 : 5
Second Speech . . . . .	6 : 6 : 6
Third Speech . . . . .	3 : 3 : 3
Fourth Speech (section a) . . . . .	3 : 3 : 3
" " (section b) . . . . .	4 : 4 : 4
" " (section c) . . . . .	5 : 5

### C) SPEECHES OF JAHWEH

The First Speech consists of four distinct parts which deal with different aspects of the same subject, and each has its distinctive strophic arrangement; the Second Speech is a unit, and the strophic system is of the "odd and even" variety. It is worthy of note that the brief dialogue between Jahweh and Job at the beginning (xl. 1ff) and Job's reply at the end (xlvi. 1-6) form integral parts of the poem. This disposes of Budde's view (which has many adherents) that xl. 4-5 originally stood after Jahweh's Second Speech.

First Speech (section a) . . . . .	4 : 4 : 4
" " (section b) . . . . .	3 : 3 : 3
" " (section c) . . . . .	4 : 4 : 4
" " (section d) . . . . .	5 : 5 : 5
Second Speech . . . . .	6 : 5 : 6

## Challenge and Response: The Mythological Clue

by Arnold J. Toynbee

In our search so far for the positive factor in the geneses of civilizations we have been employing the tactics of the classical school of modern physical science. We have been thinking in abstract terms and experimenting with the play of inanimate forces—race and environment. Now that these manœuvres have ended in our drawing blank, we may pause to consider whether our failures may not have been due to some mistake of method. Perhaps, under the insidious influence of the spirit of an outgoing age, we have fallen victims to what we will call the “apathetic fallacy.” Ruskin warned his readers against the “pathetic fallacy” of imaginatively endowing inanimate objects with life; but it is equally necessary for us to be on our guard against the converse error of applying to historical thought, which is a study of living creatures, a scientific method devised for the study of inanimate nature. In our final attempt to solve the riddle let us follow Plato’s lead and try the alternative course. Let us shut our eyes, for the moment, to the formulae of science in order to open our ears to the language of mythology.

It is clear that if the geneses of civilizations are not the result of biological factors or of geographical environment acting separately, they must be the result of some kind of interaction between them. In other words, the factor which we are seeking to identify is something not simple but multiple, not an entity but a relation. We have the choice of conceiving this relation either as an interaction between two inhuman forces or as an encounter between two superhuman personalities. Let us yield our minds to the second of these two conceptions. Perhaps it will lead us towards the light.

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*“Challenge and Response: The Mythological Clue” by Arnold J. Toynbee. The first half of this excerpt is from Chap. V, “Challenge and Response,” A Study of History, Abridgment of Vols. I–VI by D. C. Somervell (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1947), pp. 60–67. The remainder is from the original edition, Vol. I (1934), pp. 293–98. Copyright 1934, 1947, by Oxford University Press. Reprinted by permission. This arrangement made by permission of the author.*

An encounter between two superhuman personalities is the plot of some of the greatest dramas that the human imagination has conceived. An encounter between Yahweh and the Serpent is the plot of the story of the Fall of Man in the Book of Genesis; a second encounter between the same antagonists, transfigured by a progressive enlightenment of Syriac souls, is the plot of the New Testament which tells the story of the Redemption; an encounter between the Lord and Satan is the plot of the Book of Job; an encounter between the Lord and Mephistopheles is the plot of Goethe's *Faust*; an encounter between Gods and Demons is the plot of the Scandinavian *Voluspa*; an encounter between Artemis and Aphrodite is the plot of Euripides' *Hippolytus*.

We find another version of the same plot in that ubiquitous and ever-recurring myth—a "primordial image" if ever there was one—of the encounter between the Virgin and the Father of her Child. The characters in this myth have played their allotted parts on a thousand different stages under an infinite variety of names: Danae and the Shower of Gold; Europa and the Bull; Semele the Stricken Earth and Zeus the Sky that launches the thunderbolt; Creusa and Apollo in Euripides' *Ion*; Psyche and Cupid; Gretchen and Faust. The theme recurs, transfigured, in the Annunciation. In our own day in the West this protean myth has re-expressed itself as the last word of our astronomers on the genesis of the planetary system, as witness the following *credo*:

We believe . . . that some two thousand million years ago . . . a second star, wandering blindly through space, happened to come within hailing distance of the Sun. Just as the Sun and Moon raise tides on the Earth, this second star must have raised tides on the surface of the Sun. But they would be very different from the puny tides which the small mass of the Moon raises in our oceans; a huge tidal wave must have travelled over the surface of the Sun, ultimately forming a mountain of prodigious height, which would rise ever higher and higher as the cause of the disturbance came nearer and nearer. And, before the second star began to recede, its tidal pull had become so powerful that this mountain was torn to pieces and threw off small fragments of itself, much as the crest of a wave throws off spray. These small fragments have been circulating round their parent sun ever since. They are the planets, great and small, of which our Earth is one.<sup>1</sup>

Thus out of the mouth of the mathematical astronomer, when all his complex calculations are done, there comes forth, once again, the myth of the encounter between the Sun Goddess and her ravisher that is so familiar a tale in the mouths of the untutored children of nature.

<sup>1</sup> Sir James Jeans, *The Mysterious Universe* (Cambridge: University Press, 1930), pp. 1-2.

The presence and potency of this duality in the causation of the civilizations whose geneses we are studying is admitted by a Modern Western archaeologist whose studies begin with a concentration on environment and end with an intuition of the mystery of life:

Environment . . . is not the total causation in culture-shaping. . . . It is, beyond doubt, the most conspicuous single factor. . . . But there is still an indefinable factor which may best be designated quite frankly as  $x$ , the unknown quantity, apparently psychological in kind. . . . If  $x$  be not the most conspicuous factor in the matter, it certainly is the most important, the most fate-laden.<sup>2</sup>

In our present study of history this insistent theme of the superhuman encounter has asserted itself already. At an early stage we observed that "a society . . . is confronted in the course of its life by a succession of problems" and that "the presentation of each problem is a challenge to undergo an ordeal."

Let us try to analyse the plot of this story or drama which repeats itself in such different contexts and in such various forms.

We may begin with two general features: the encounter is conceived of as a rare and sometimes as a unique event; and it has consequences which are vast in proportion to the vastness of the breach which it makes in the customary course of nature.

Even in the easy-going world of Hellenic mythology, where the gods saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and had their way with so many of them that their victims could be marshalled and paraded in poetic catalogues, such incidents never ceased to be sensational affairs and invariably resulted in the births of heroes. In the versions of the plot in which both parties to the encounter are superhuman, the rarity and momentousness of the event are thrown into stronger relief. In the Book of Job, "the day when the Sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them," is evidently conceived of as an unusual occasion; and so is the encounter between the Lord and Mephistopheles in the "Prologue in Heaven" (suggested, of course, by the opening of the Book of Job) which starts the action of Goethe's *Faust*. In both these dramas the consequences on Earth of the encounter in Heaven are tremendous. The personal ordeals of Job and Faust represent, in the intuitive language of fiction, the infinitely multiple ordeal of mankind; and, in the language of theology, the same vast consequence is represented as following from the superhuman encounters that are portrayed in the Book of Genesis and in the New Testament. The expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, which follows the encounter between Yahweh and

<sup>2</sup> P. A. Means, *Ancient Civilization of the Andes* (New York and London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931), pp. 25-26.

the Serpent, is nothing less than the Fall of Man; the passion of Christ in the New Testament is nothing less than Man's Redemption. Even the birth of our planetary system from the encounter of two suns, as pictured by our modern astronomer, is declared by the same authority to be "an event of almost unimaginable rarity."

In every case the story opens with a perfect state of Yin. *Faust* is perfect in knowledge; *Job* is perfect in goodness and prosperity; Adam and Eve are perfect in innocence and ease; the Virgins—*Gretchen*, *Danae* and the rest—are perfect in purity and beauty. In the astronomer's universe the Sun, a perfect orb, travels on its course intact and whole. When Yin is thus complete, it is ready to pass over into Yang. But what is to make it pass? A change in a state which, by definition, is perfect after its kind can only be started by an impulse or motive which comes from outside. If we think of the state as one of physical equilibrium, we must bring in another star. If we think of it as one of psychic beatitude or *nirvana*, we must bring another actor on to the stage: a critic to set the mind thinking again by suggesting doubts; an adversary to set the heart feeling again by instilling distress or discontent or fear or antipathy. This is the role of the Serpent in *Genesis*, of Satan in the Book of *Job*, of Mephistopheles in *Faust*, of Loki in the Scandinavian mythology, of the Divine Lovers in the Virgin myths.

In the language of science we may say that the function of the intruding factor is to supply that on which it intrudes with a stimulus of the kind best calculated to evoke the most potently creative variations. In the language of mythology and theology, the impulse or motive which makes a perfect Yin-state pass over into new Yang-activity comes from an intrusion of the Devil into the universe of God. The event can best be described in these mythological images because they are not embarrassed by the contradiction that arises when the statement is translated into logical terms. In logic, if God's universe is perfect, there cannot be a Devil outside it, while, if the Devil exists, the perfection which he comes to spoil must have been incomplete already through the very fact of his existence. This logical contradiction, which cannot be logically resolved, is intuitively transcended in the imagery of the poet and prophet, who give glory to an omnipotent God yet take it for granted that He is subject to two crucial limitations.

The first limitation is that, in the perfection of what He has created already, He cannot find an opportunity for further creative activity. If God is conceived of as transcendent, the works of creation are as glorious as ever they were but they cannot "be changed from glory into glory." The second limitation on God's power is that when the opportunity for fresh creation is offered to Him from outside He cannot but take it. When the Devil challenges Him He cannot refuse to take the

challenge up. God is bound to accept the predicament because He can refuse only at the price of denying His own nature and ceasing to be God.

If God is thus not omnipotent in logical terms, is He still mythologically invincible? If He is bound to take up the Devil's challenge, is He also bound to win the ensuing battle? In Euripides' *Hippolytus*, where God's part is played by Artemis and the Devil's by Aphrodite, Artemis is not only unable to decline the combat but is foredoomed to defeat. The relations between the Olympians are anarchic and Artemis in the epilogue can console herself only by making up her mind that one day she will play the Devil's role herself at Aphrodite's expense. The result is not creation but destruction. In the Scandinavian version destruction is likewise the outcome in *Ragnarök*—when "Gods and Demons slay and are slain"—though the unique genius of the author of *Voluspa* makes his Sibyl's vision pierce the gloom to behold the light of a new dawn beyond it. On the other hand, in another version of the plot, the combat which follows the compulsory acceptance of the challenge takes the form, not of an exchange of fire in which the Devil has the first shot and cannot fail to kill his man, but of a wager which the Devil is apparently bound to lose. The classic works in which this wager *motif* is worked out are the Book of Job and Goethe's *Faust*.

It is in Goethe's drama that the point is most clearly made. After the Lord has accepted the wager with Mephistopheles in Heaven, the terms are agreed on Earth, between Mephistopheles and Faust, as follows:

*Faust.* Comfort and quiet!—no, no! none of these  
For me—I ask them not—I seek them not.  
If ever I upon the bed of sloth  
Lie down and rest, then be the hour in which  
I so lie down and rest my last of life.  
Canst thou by falsehood or by flattery  
Delude me into self-complacent smiles,  
Cheat me into tranquillity? Come then,  
And welcome, life's last day—be this our wager.

*Meph.* Done.

*Faust.* Done, say I: clench we at once the bargain.  
If ever time should flow so calmly on,  
Soothing my spirits in such oblivion  
That in the pleasant trance I would arrest  
And hail the happy moment in its course,  
Bidding it linger with me. . . .  
Then willingly do I consent to perish.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Goethe's *Faust*, ll. 1692–1706 (John Anster's translation).

The bearing of this mythical compact upon our problem of the geneses of civilizations can be brought out by identifying Faust, at the moment when he makes his bet, with one of those "awakened sleepers" who have risen from the ledge on which they had been lying torpid and have started to climb on up the face of the cliff. In the language of our simile, Faust is saying: "I have made up my mind to leave this ledge and climb this precipice in search of the next ledge above. In attempting this I am aware that I am leaving safety behind me. Yet, for the sake of the possibility of achievement, I will take the risk of a fall and destruction."

In the story as told by Goethe the intrepid climber, after an ordeal of moral dangers and desperate reverses, succeeds in the end in scaling the cliff triumphantly. In the New Testament the same ending is given, through the revelation of a second encounter between the same pair of antagonists, to the combat between Yahweh and the Serpent which, in the original version in Genesis, had ended rather in the manner of the combat between Artemis and Aphrodite in the *Hippolytus*.

In Job, *Faust* and the New Testament alike it is suggested, or even declared outright, that the wager cannot be won by the Devil; that the Devil, in meddling with God's work, cannot frustrate but can only serve the purpose of God, who remains master of the situation all the time and gives the Devil rope for the Devil to hang himself. Then has the Devil been cheated? Did God accept a wager which He knew He could not lose? That would be a hard saying; for if it were true the whole transaction would have been a sham. An encounter which was no encounter could not produce the consequences of an encounter—the vast cosmic consequence of causing Yin to pass over into Yang. Perhaps the explanation is that the wager which the Devil offers and which God accepts covers, and thereby puts in real jeopardy, a part of God's creation but not the whole of it. The part really is at stake; and, though the whole is not, the chances and changes to which the part is exposed cannot conceivably leave the whole unaffected. In the language of mythology, when one of God's creatures is tempted by the Devil, God Himself is thereby given the opportunity to re-create the World. The Devil's intervention, whether it succeeds or fails on the particular issue—and either result is possible—has accomplished that transition from Yin to Yang for which God has been yearning.

As for the human protagonist's part, suffering is the keynote of it in every presentation of the drama, whether the player of the part is Jesus or Job or Faust or Adam and Eve. The picture of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is a reminiscence of the Yin-state to which primitive man attained in the food-gathering phase of economy, after he had established his ascendancy over the rest of the flora and fauna of the Earth. The Fall, in response to the temptation to eat of the Tree

of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, symbolizes the acceptance of a challenge to abandon this achieved integration and to venture upon a fresh differentiation out of which a fresh integration may—or may not—arise. The expulsion from the Garden into an unfriendly world in which the Woman must bring forth children in sorrow and the Man must eat bread in the sweat of his face, is the ordeal which the acceptance of the Serpent's challenge has entailed. The sexual intercourse between Adam and Eve, which follows, is an act of social creation. It bears fruit in the birth of two sons who impersonate two nascent civilizations: Abel the keeper of sheep and Cain the tiller of the ground. . . .

A classical scholar likewise translates the story into the scientific terminology of our age:

It is . . . a paradox of advancement that, if Necessity be the mother of Invention, the other parent is Obstinacy, the determination that you will go on living under adverse conditions rather than cut your losses and go where life is easier. It was no accident, that is, that civilization, as we know it, began in that ebb and flow of climate, flora and fauna which characterizes the four-fold Ice Age. Those primates who just "got out" as arboreal conditions wilted retained their primacy among the servants of natural law, but they forewent the conquest of nature. Those others won through, and became men, who stood their ground when there were no more trees to sit in, who "made do" with meat when fruit did not ripen, who made fires and clothes rather than follow the sunshine; who fortified their lairs and trained their young and vindicated the reasonableness of a world that seemed so reasonless.<sup>4</sup>

The first stage, then, in the human protagonist's ordeal is a transition from Yin to Yang through a dynamic act—performed by God's creature under temptation from the Adversary—which enables God Himself to resume His creative activity. But this progress has to be paid for; and it is not God—a hard master, reaping where He has not sown, and gathering where He has not strawed<sup>5</sup>—but God's servant, the human sower, who pays the price.

The second stage in the human protagonist's ordeal is the crisis. He realizes that his dynamic act, which has re-liberated the creative power of his Master and Maker, has set his own feet on a course which is leading him to suffering and death. In an agony of disillusionment and horror,<sup>6</sup> he rebels against the fate which, by his own act, he has brought

<sup>4</sup> J. L. Myres, *Who Were the Greeks?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1930), pp. 277-78. [The omission immediately preceding was of a long quotation from Ellsworth Huntington making a similar point—Ed.]

<sup>5</sup> Matthew xxv. 24. [With this paragraph we pick up Toynbee's original, the rest of which Somervell's abridgment does not include. The omissions are entirely of illustrative quotations, with occasionally a little connective tissue—Ed.]

<sup>6</sup> [A little excursus on the psychology of suffering omitted—Ed.]

upon himself for God's gain. The crisis is resolved when he resigns himself consciously to be the instrument of God's will, the tool in God's hands; and this activity through passivity, this victory through defeat, brings on another cosmic change. Just as the dynamic act in the first phase of the ordeal shook the Universe out of Yin into Yang, so the act of resignation in the second phase reverses the rhythm of the Universe—guiding it now from motion towards rest, from storm towards calm, from discord towards harmony, from Yang towards Yin again.

In the cry of a Hellenic poet, we hear the note of agony without a note of resignation to follow:

μηκέτ' ἔπειτ' ὥφελλον ἔγω πέμπτοισι μετεῖναι  
ἀνδράσιν, ἀλλ' ἡ πρόσθε θανεῖν ἡ ἔπειτα γενέσθαι.<sup>7</sup>

The tragedy rises to a higher level in the Scandinavian vision of Odin, on the eve of Ragnarök, mentally striving with all his might to wrest the secret of Fate from the powers that hold it—not in order to save himself alive but for the sake of the universe of Gods and Men who look to him, the All Father, to preserve them. In the passion of Jesus, we are initiated into the whole psychological experience.

When Jesus first realizes His destiny, in the course of His last journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, He is master of the situation; and it is His disciples, to whom He communicates His intuition immediately before,<sup>8</sup> and again immediately after,<sup>9</sup> His transfiguration, who are perplexed and dismayed. The agony comes upon Him, on the eve of His passion, in the Garden of Gethsemane,<sup>10</sup> and is resolved in the prayer: "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, Thy will be done."<sup>11</sup> Yet the agony recurs when the sufferer is hanging on the Cross, where the final cry of despair—"My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken me?"<sup>12</sup>—precedes the final words of resignation: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit,"<sup>13</sup> and "It is finished."<sup>14</sup> . . .

<sup>7</sup> Hesiod, *Works and Days*, ll. 174–75. ["Thereafter, would that I were not among the men of the fifth generation, but either had died before or been born afterwards." Trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann Ltd.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936. Used by permission —Ed.]

<sup>8</sup> Matthew xvi. 13–23; Mark viii. 27–33; Luke ix. 18–22.

<sup>9</sup> Matthew xvii. 10–12; Mark xi. 11–13.

<sup>10</sup> Matthew xxvi. 36–46; Mark xiv. 32–42; Luke xxii. 39–46. Compare John xii. 23–28.

<sup>11</sup> Matthew xxvi. 42.

<sup>12</sup> Matthew xxvii. 46; Mark xv. 34.

<sup>13</sup> Luke xxiii. 46.

<sup>14</sup> John xix. 30.

The same experience, again, is narrated to the Wedding-Guest by the Ancient Mariner, who has brought upon himself the ordeal of "Life-in-Death" by his criminal yet none the less dynamic act of shooting the Albatross:

Alone, alone, all, all alone,  
 Alone, on a wide wide sea!  
 And never a saint took pity on  
 My soul in agony.

The many men, so beautiful!  
 And they all dead did lie:  
 And a thousand thousand slimy things  
 Lived on; and so did I.

In this ordeal, the curse is lifted when the sufferer resigns himself to the consequences of his act and has a vision of beauty where he had only perceived hideousness so long as his heart remained hard:

O happy living things! No tongue  
 Their beauty might declare:  
 A spring of love gushed from my heart,  
 And I blessed them unaware:  
 Sure my kind saint took pity on me,  
 And I blessed them unaware.

The self-same moment I could pray;  
 And from my neck so free  
 The Albatross fell off, and sank  
 Like lead into the sea.

This is the turning-point in the Romantic Odyssey. The divine powers which had magically becalmed the ship now magically waft her to port and bring the villain—or the hero—of the ballad home to his own country.

So, too, Job humbles himself to God at the end of his colloquy with his friends, when Elihu has shown how God is just in His ways and is to be feared because of His great words in which His wisdom is unsearchable, and when the Lord Himself, addressing Job out of the whirlwind, has challenged the sufferer to continue the debate with Him.

Then Job answered the Lord and said:

"Behold, I am vile. What shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.

"Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further. . . .

"I know that Thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withheld from Thee. . . .

"I have uttered that I understood not—things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. . . .

"I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee.

"Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."<sup>15</sup>

In this Syriac poem, the psychology is crude. The resignation comes, not through a spiritual intuition in the soul, but through a physical manifestation to the eye of God's irresistible force. In Goethe's version of the drama, the sequence of agony and resignation holds its place as the crisis and the culmination of the plot—Gretchen passes through it in the last scene of Part I<sup>16</sup> and Faust, in his turn, at the climax of Part II<sup>17</sup>—but the ethos is transformed beyond recognition.

In the scene in Gretchen's prison, in the grey dawn of her last day, Mephistopheles seeks to take advantage of Gretchen's agony in order to induce her to forgo her salvation by escaping her doom. It seems the easiest enterprise that he has yet essayed. His victim is distraught with horror at the imagination of what lies before her; it is the hour at which human vitality is at its lowest ebb; the pains of death are imminent; the prospect of escape is offered suddenly and unexpectedly; and it is Gretchen's lover Faust himself who implores her to flee with him through the magically opened prison doors. Yet Gretchen, raving in her agony, seems insensible to Faust's appeal, until at last Mephistopheles, in his impatience, intervenes himself. That is the moment of the tempter's defeat; for Gretchen, recognizing him for what he is, awakes from her frenzied trance and takes refuge in the judgement of God—no longer rooted to the spot in a nightmare like the Aeschylean Cassandra, but deliberately rejecting, like the Platonic Socrates, a possibility of escape of which she is fully aware. . . .

In the third stage, the reversal of the cosmic rhythm from Yang towards Yin, which was initiated in the second stage, is carried to completion. . . .

In this new creation, which the ordeal of one of God's creatures has enabled God to achieve, the sufferer himself returns to a state of peace and harmony and bliss on a higher level than the state which he left behind when he responded to the tempter's challenge. In the Book of Job, the achievement is startlingly crude—the Lord convinces Job that He is answerable for His acts to no man—and the restoration is naïvely material: "the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning" by giving him fairer daughters than those that he had lost

<sup>15</sup> Job xl. 3-5 and xlii. 2-6.

<sup>16</sup> *Faust*, ll. 4405-4612.

<sup>17</sup> *Faust*, ll. 11384-510.

and twice as many sheep and camels and oxen and asses.<sup>18</sup> In the New Testament, the agony and resignation and passion of Jesus achieve the redemption of Man and are followed by the Redeemer's resurrection and ascension. In the Scandinavian Mythology, Odin returns to life after hanging upon a tree, and has keener vision in his one eye than he had before he plucked out his other eye and cast it from him as the purchase-price of wisdom.<sup>19</sup> In Goethe's *Faust*, the last scene of the second part, in which the Virgin Goddess, with her train of penitents, grants an epiphany to the pilgrims who have scaled the rugged mountain to its summit, is the counterpart of the Prologue in Heaven with which the first part of the play opens. The two scenes correspond, as, in the Christian version of the myth, Man's state of blessedness after the Redemption corresponds to his state of innocence before the Fall. The cosmic rhythm has come round, full circle, from Yin through Yang to Yin; but the latter Yin-state differs from the former with the difference of spring from autumn. The works of creation, which the Archangels hymned<sup>20</sup> and which Faust's curse shattered,<sup>21</sup> arise in splendor again, to be hymned by the Pater Profundus;<sup>22</sup> but this time they are in the tender shoot instead of being ripe for the sickle. Through Faust's dynamic act and Gretchen's act of resignation, the Lord has been enabled to make all things new; and, in this new creation, the human protagonists in the divine drama have their part. Gretchen, whose salvation had been proclaimed by the voice from Heaven at the dawn of her last day on Earth, appears, transfigured as Una Poenitentium, in Mary's train, and the *visio beatifica* is vouchsafed to Faust, who rises to join her, transfigured as Doctor Marianus. . . . Thus the manifestation of God as a hard master proves not to have been the ultimate truth. The ordeal of God's creature appears in retrospect as a revelation, not of God's callousness or cruelty, but of His love. . . .

Finally, the sufferer triumphant serves as a pioneer. "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."<sup>23</sup> The human protagonist in the divine drama not only serves God by enabling Him to renew His creation, but also serves his fellow-men by pointing a way for others to follow.<sup>24</sup> Job's intercession

<sup>18</sup> Job xlvi. 12-17, compared with i. 2-3.

<sup>19</sup> [Expansive footnote omitted—Ed.]

<sup>20</sup> *Faust*, ll. 243-70.

<sup>21</sup> *Faust*, ll. 1583-1606.

<sup>22</sup> *Faust*, ll. 11866-89.

<sup>23</sup> Matthew vii. 14.

<sup>24</sup> In the Hellenic story of Prometheus, the two services are incompatible, and the hero suffers because he has served Man in God's despite. For an interpretation of Aeschylus's version of the Prometheus Myth, see Part III, B, below. [Vol. III, pp. 112-27—Ed.]

averts the Lord's wrath from Job's friends.<sup>25</sup> Gretchen's intercession wins for Faust the *visio beatifica*.<sup>26</sup> When Jesus first foreshadows His ordeal to His disciples, He proclaims, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me";<sup>27</sup> and on the eve of His passion He adds: "And I, if I be lifted up from the Earth, will draw all men unto me."<sup>28</sup> . . .<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Job xlvi. 7-10.

<sup>26</sup> *Faust*, II. 12069-111.

<sup>27</sup> Matthew xvi. 24-28; Mark viii. 34-38; Luke ix. 23-27.

<sup>28</sup> John xii. 32.

<sup>29</sup> [Omitting the original conclusion, largely quotations from Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, Book I, II. 62-79, and John xiv. 1-6—Ed.]

# Job and the Modern World

by *Eugene Goodheart*

Behind much of the modern literature of suffering is the greatest single work of the Bible, *The Book of Job*. We hear echoes of *Job* in books as different from one another as *The Brothers Karamazov*, *Jude the Obscure* and *The Castle*. If, however, we return to *Job* from a reading of these works, we have the strange experience that the view of life that it presents is almost as alien to the modern sensibility as the story of the sacrifice of Isaac or the gospels of Christ. The Jobean element in *The Brothers Karamazov* or *Jude the Obscure*, for instance, represents the exploitation of what is most accessible in *Job* to the modern sensibility: the sense of gratuitous suffering, the impassioned indignation; but in the rhythm of *Job* the suffering and the indignation have significance that radically distinguishes *Job* from the modern works I have just mentioned. (The only modern writer who has affinities with *Job* is Shakespeare and particularly the Shakespeare of *King Lear*. It is significant that the multiple author of *Job* is frequently characterized by critics and scholars anachronistically as the Shakespeare of the Bible.)

I am going to try to recapture the essential intention of *Job* and distinguish the ethos of its sensibility from the ethos of the modern sensibility. But first I want to rehearse the main action of the book.

*Job* is the perfect and upright man whom God, on a dare from Satan, victimizes in the most outrageous fashion in order to test his faith. *Job* first loses his material prosperity, then his family and finally experiences the most acute physical suffering. He endures—up to a point; his patience is proverbial. Finally however, there is a great outburst of indignation. In an anguish of flesh and spirit, he challenges divine justice. Now that the torrent has been loosed, nothing can stop it. Friends of his come to console him, and each one presumes to discover a purpose in *Job's* afflictions. Perhaps he is suffering for the sins of his fathers or those of his children. Each consolation has the un-

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deniable stamp of sophistry (for what do his friends know of God's purposes?), and Job's refusal to be consoled is simply another vindication of his integrity, his integrity even in defiance of his fate. We are never left with the slightest doubt of Job's character. He remains throughout perfect and upright.

Such has been the force of Job's indignation that God, turning aside the false pieties of the comforters, feels called upon to declare himself. And yet the Voice Out of the Whirlwind, despite the undeniable magnificence of its utterance, neither explains nor justifies God's treatment of Job. Job's indignant questions go unanswered. Indeed, the immediate impression is that questions are treated as impertinences, almost beneath the notice of the divinity which the magnificent poetry of the Voice is celebrating. And yet just as mysteriously as the Voice has spoken, Job with the perfect economy of movement that characterizes not only *Job*, but the whole of the Bible, abhors himself and repents in dust and ashes.

In light of the multiple authorship of *Job* can we talk about it as a unified work? There is obviously a conflict of intentions. The prose passages that concern God and Satan have the effect of rationalizing Job's afflictions: the prologue makes them into a test of Job's faith, and the epilogue subverts the scepticism of the poetry by seeing to it that justice is done. Job's anguished claim that the virtuous are unrewarded and the vicious unpunished is, as it were, denied by the epilogue. The fact of multiple authorship, however, does little damage to the coherence of the book; its inconsistencies are like the inconsistencies of a Gothic cathedral, many hands conspiring in their individuality to create a unified impression. Moreover, the conflict of intention is superficial. One might say that the poetic passages represent a deepening, rather than a contradiction of the original conception of the Job story. If the greatness of *Job* lies chiefly in the poetic passages, that greatness is not to be understood as belonging solely to its scepticism: that is, to its sense of the gratuitous cruelty of the universe. The greatness of *Job* lies as well in its triumphant religious clarity, and here the intentions of the narrative and the poetry virtually coincide. The greatness of *Job* is in the way in which it answers a question which every age must ask and which was asked in the nineteenth century by Dostoevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Towards the end of *The Brothers*, Dmitri dreams that he is riding in his carriage on the steppes and that he suddenly comes upon a woman and her child. They have been victims of fire and they are wandering away from their village, homeless. Dmitri asks the coachman why the child is crying, and the coachman, good empirical-rationalist that he is, answers that their house has burned down. But Dmitri is asking another kind of question. Not what has happened,

but why it has happened. Why was the world made in such a way that houses must burn down and the innocent must suffer? Dmitri's question is the question that Job asks himself, a question that must be asked again and again in every age. Indeed, the test of the integrity of an age is its capacity to ask the question and to seek the answer.

What kind of answer does *Job* give to the question? The answer certainly is not to be found in any explicit statement in the book. The book is not a philosophical treatise, it is a dramatic poem and its significances lie in character and situation, in the relationships between characters, in the relationship between character and situation. And yet having said this, the problem of interpretation is as formidable as ever. For so much of the meaning of *Job* seems to be—at least for the modern reader—in what is left out. For instance, we want to know what went on in Job's mind during the time that the Voice speaks out of the whirlwind. What is the human and psychological burden of the simple phrase: "then Job abhorred himself and repented in dust and ashes"?

Has Job reluctantly surrendered to his ineluctable fate? Is his refusal to persist in his indignation the result of a sudden perception that his faith is being tested, that his utterance during his period of patience ("though he slay me, yet will I trust in him") is in danger of being betrayed by his indignation and that he must inhibit the indignation if he is to remain a moral man? Or is his surrender simply an act of cowardice, an unwillingness to assume the role of the romantic hero? Is his submission, from another point of view, the only moral alternative, the others being suicide or dissipation or a romantic refusal to accept his fate?

It is possible to make out a case for the heroism of Job's final action. One might say that Job is accepting, not God's cruelty, but the limits that God has set upon Job's capacity to understand its meaning. God's imposition is so final that further evidence would be even morally superfluous. For what could Job hope to gain from continued indignation? Job is not confronted by Adam's choice of knowledge and suffering *versus* ignorance and happiness. When Adam eats of the tree of knowledge, he is not defying his destiny, he is creating it. And one could interpret Adam's action as an heroic one. But in *Job* no price is put on the kind of knowledge that Job desires. It cannot be won even by suffering, for that kind of knowledge is fate, fate which has already been created and for which mystery is its necessary condition. Thus, the only honorable course for Job—in this interpretation—is to make his peace with God. The alternatives, suicide and dissipation, share a common characteristic: both involve a surrender of one's integrity, an unmaking of self. But Job in his act of submission remains true to himself. He responds to God's cruelty by his stern refusal to

disintegrate. He is uncompromised at the end, free of the mealy-mouthed pieties of his comforters. One might say that the book demonstrates the superiority of Job's morality to the cruelty of divine justice.

The biblical narrative—I have in mind particularly *The Pentateuch*—in its spare and elliptical character invites the kind of interpretation I have just made. The modern reader feels a demand to supply the psychological and moral detail of actions that are so sparingly rendered. In Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* and Mann's *Joseph and His Brothers* we are given glimpses of the characters of Abraham, Isaac and Joseph, glimpses that we never get in the Bible. . . . Thus Kierkegaard's interpretation of the Abraham story becomes an opportunity for Kierkegaard to express the dilemmas of religious belief in the modern world—and the leap of faith that is necessary to transcend those dilemmas.

. . . Kierkegaard interiorizes the story of the sacrifice of Isaac, changing it from a drama of deed to a drama of motive:

. . . Then Abraham lifted up the boy, he walked with him by his side, and his talk was full of comfort and exhortation. But Isaac could not understand him. He climbed Mount Moriah, but Isaac understood him not. Then for an instant he turned away from him, and when Isaac again saw Abraham's face it was changed, his glance was wild, his form was horror. He seized Isaac by the throat, threw him to the ground, and said, "Stupid boy, dost thou then suppose that I am thy father, I am an idolater? Dost thou suppose that this is God's bidding? No, it is my desire." Then Isaac trembled and cried out in his terror, "O God in heaven, have compassion upon me. If I have no father upon earth, be Thou my father!" But Abraham in a low voice said to himself, "O Lord in heaven, I thank Thee. After all it is better for him to believe that I am a monster, rather than that he should lose faith in Thee." <sup>1</sup>

How the Biblical narrative has been altered by the act of conceiving the inner lives of Abraham and Isaac! Brilliant as Kierkegaard's reading is, it is a typical instance of the modern refusal to accept the mystery of the story, it is an instance of the modern need to rationalize it by fleshing it out with the psychological and moral detail of our own experience. As in the story of the sacrifice, the truth of *Job* lies not in what is absent or hidden; it lies chiefly in what the work reveals.

Let me return for a moment to the last sentence of my summary of the action of *Job*. "And just as mysteriously as the Voice has spoken,

<sup>1</sup> [Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, Anchor Books edition (*Fear and Trembling* and *The Sickness unto Death*, trans. by Walter Lowrie; New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1954), p. 27. Copyright © 1941, 1954 by Princeton University Press. Used by permission of Princeton University Press. The preceding omissions briefly discussed the problem raised when a work is reinterpreted by a later work based upon it. Other omissions are minor, not touching upon the argument—Ed.]

Job with the perfect economy of movement that characterizes not only the book, but the whole of the Bible, abhors himself and repents in dust and ashes." This certainly does not seem like an explanation of Job's action, but it is to my mind better than an explanation. Properly understood, it represents the manner by which we are to intuit the meaning of Job's submission to God.

What fails to satisfy us about the submission is the mystery of it. We either disbelieve it or mistrust it and our first impulse is to make it visible. We must solve the mystery—for the idea of the mysterious gives us a sense of the unresolved. But if we read *Job* with the kind of suspension of disbelief that Coleridge advocated as the necessary condition of an imaginatively critical reading, we may have a perception of the utter rightness of the book, the rightness of the impression that it makes upon us despite our moral and intellectual resistance to it. The rhythm of the work, its discords, the resolution of the discords and the final harmony to which the book conspires and which it reaches depend completely on the mysterious—that is, on nothing that we can explain by modern rationalism or psychology. If we try to get behind the action to psychology, the interpretation, however internally coherent it might be, is bound to fail to correspond with our sense of the book's rhythm, where it seems to me the intrinsic meaning lies. Our experience of the rhythm of the book certainly does not justify the interpretation that Job, by submitting, is slyly affirming himself in his moral integrity against God's gratuitous cruelty.

Let me state the issue somewhat differently. . . . In Aristotelian terms the movement in *Job* is created not by an efficient cause but by the final cause. The action of Job abhorring himself and repenting is significant not for any motives in Job, but for its movement towards *Someone* beyond Job. The mere presence of God is sufficient to command or explain Job's action. It is for this reason that the lack of psychological or moral detail is not a function of the primitivism of the writer, but rather a function of the book's meaning—a way the book has of indicating that its meaning is not in Job's psychology, but in Job's relationship to God.

While a psychological attention to *Job* might produce interesting interpretations, it would do violence to the integrity of the work. Nothing must subvert our sense of the authenticity of Job's final gesture. To understand it as cowardice or a sly assertion of superiority over God is to mistake the rhythm of the work. Job "abhors himself and repents in dust and ashes." The phrase is burdened by no hidden motives; it bears the pressure only of the Voice of God, of Job's hearing it and of his consequent seeing of it with his mind's eye. And here it seems to me we have the essential difference between the sensibilities of the biblical and the modern worlds.

The modern protest occurs in a world in which the voice of God is not heard. All that is heard is the echo of protest. The result is that the protest is magnified and amplified. Since there is no answering voice, the protest is limited only by the limits of the energy of the protest. . . .

*Notes from the Underground* is a graphic instance of what has happened to the Jobean protest in the modern world. Early in the novel there is a contemptuous attack on the tragic view (which is the view of *Job*) from the romantic standpoint.

With people who know how to revenge themselves and to stand up for themselves in general, how is it done? Why, when they are possessed, let us suppose, by the feeling of revenge, then for the time being there is nothing else but that feeling left in their whole being. Such a gentleman simply dashes straight for his object like an infuriated bull with its horns down, and nothing but a wall will stop him. (By the way: facing the wall, such gentlemen—that is, the "direct" persons and men of action—are genuinely nonplussed. For them a wall is not an evasion, as for us who think and consequently do nothing; it is not an excuse for turning aside, an excuse for which we always are very glad, though we scarcely believe in it ourselves, as a rule. No, they are nonplussed in all sincerity. The wall has for them something tranquilizing, morally soothing, final—perhaps even something mysterious—but of the wall more later.)<sup>2</sup>

We turn a page and find this about the wall.

As though such a stone wall really were a consolation, and really did contain some word of conciliation, simply because it is as true as twice two makes four. Oh, absurdity of absurdities! How much better it is to understand it all, to recognize it all, all the impossibilities and the stone wall; not to be reconciled to one of those impossibilities and stone walls if it disgusts you to be reconciled to it; by the way of the most inevitable, logical combinations to reach the most revolting conclusions on the everlasting theme, that you yourself are somehow to blame even for the stone wall, though again it is as clear as day you are not to blame in the least, and therefore grinding your teeth in silent impotence to sink into luxurious inertia, brooding on the fact that there is no one for you even to feel vindictive against, that you have not, and perhaps never will have, an object for your spite, that it is a sleight-of-hand, a bit of juggling, a cardsharpener's trick, that it is simply a mess, no knowing what and no knowing who. But in spite of all these uncertainties and juggleries, there is still an ache in you, and the more you do not know, the worse the ache.

<sup>2</sup> [From *Notes from the Underground*, trans. by Constance Garnett, Sec. iii, Part I. Reprinted by permission of The Macmillan Company, New York, and William Heinemann, Ltd., London—Ed.]

The stone wall represents the laws of nature. In the novel, science indifferently performs the role of God, defining, as it were, the human condition. But what a difference between the arithmetic of the stone wall and the creative power of a living God. Naturally, the underground man refuses to be reconciled to the stone wall, though he lacks the courage to run his head against it. In his imagination where all his courage resides, he can conceive grandiose defiant gestures and refuse to submit to the inevitable. And this is what the romantic protest amounts to: a refusal to submit to the inevitable, a curiously mixed hatred of and disbelief in the inevitable. The objective world dissolves into the psychological confusions of the underground man. The stone wall is at once reality and illusion: inimical to and identical with the underground man, impossible to transcend and yet impossible to accept, the torment with which he is undeservedly afflicted and yet which he himself has created. The novel is obsessed by paradox and dilemma, a testimony to what happens to man when he can no longer experience life beyond the self—when the private self is hypostasized as the real world.

The psychological orientation of so much of modern literature, indeed of modern culture, reflects the inevitable egotism of a Godless universe. It is inconceivable that Job could have persisted in his indignation after he had heard the Voice of God, not because the Voice had intimidated him, but because it has defined the limits of his protest and, by extension, of his egotism. Job learns that his suffering is not the world—that there is a great world, an infinitely greater world, beyond his suffering. If the writer of *Job* had given us a glimpse of Job's thoughts and feelings at the end, he would have destroyed the superb balance that is created between God's self-assertion and Job's submission. The values of *Job* are perfectly distributed by the economy of its imaginative attention.

The submission of Job is an act of freedom and paradoxically an act which is made possible by the divine power that limits him. The only modern work I know that has a similar perception of the meaning of freedom—in the interaction of self and otherness—is *King Lear*. The transformation that takes place in Lear from monumental vanity to the most compassionate concern for the welfare of others has something of the rhythm of Job's self-exaltation in his suffering and his final acquiescence in the inevitable. The transformation is incredibly painful—there is even more pain in *Lear* than in *Job*—but it is also magnificent, full of that grace that redeems and purifies. If we remember the religious connotation of the word grace, then we will have the right sense of the hero's will—of Job's and Lear's will—a supple strength, unlike the fixed, disembodied and abstract strength of the romantic hero's will. The power to endure catastrophe gracefully is

an heroic power and a power that the modern spirit has yielded to self-exaltation through suffering.

What a presumption of Archibald MacLeish to have magnified the suffering of Job and minimized the counterbalancing presence of God! If MacLeish had intended satire, he might have revealed not only the suffering of the modern person, but the poverty of his suffering in his impulse towards self-magnification. But MacLeish takes his version of *Job* seriously—indeed, with a desperate seriousness. God and Satan are reduced to circus performers and the smug J. B., an unwitting Babbitt, vice-president of Organization Incorporated, becomes the center of significance. And the most flagrant demonstration of MacLeish's failure to be inspired by the original text is in the way in which he resolves the misfortunes of his organization man. All pretense at a concern with the man-God relation disappears. J. B. and his wife come together again after a short estrangement, and we are supposed to respond to the triumph of life in the new "inter-personal" relations that J. B. establishes with his wife. Love conquers all—this time with the hygienic sanction of revisionist Freudian psychology. MacLeish is simply incapable of imagining life beyond the squalid domesticities of middle class existence.

One cannot reproach MacLeish for what is a cultural failure. We cannot demand that a man envisage God in an epoch in which, as Nietzsche has said, God is dead. But we can demand of those gifted with the intelligence and the imagination to conceive works of art that they learn contempt for such an epoch, that they learn to regard the petty egotisms of men as less than world-shaking. There is at least one great writer of our century who had a vision of the other world which recalls the vision that we find in the Bible, D. H. Lawrence. Lawrence understood *Job* better than any modern I know. In a letter to a young novelist he writes as follows:

I think the greatest book I know on the subject [of egotism] is the book of *Job*. *Job* was a great, splendid Egoist. But whereas Hardy and the moderns end with "Let the day perish—" or more beautifully—"the waters wear the stones; thou washest away the things which grow out of the dust of the earth; thou destroyest the hope of man:

Thou prevalest for ever against him, and he passeth: thou changest his countenance and sendest him away."—the real book of *Job* ends—"Then *Job* answered the Lord and said:

I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee.

Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that I understood not: things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.

Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee.

Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." If you want a story of your own soul, it is perfectly done in the book of Job—much better than in *Letters from the Underground*.

But the moderns today prefer to end insisting on the sad plight. It is characteristic of us that we have preserved, of a trilogy which was really Prometheus Unbound, only the Prometheus Bound and terribly suffering on the rock of his own egotism.<sup>8</sup>

It has been said of Kafka, whose profound despair puts him at the opposite pole of a writer like Lawrence, that his perception of the relations between man and God in *The Trial* and *The Castle* has affinities with the perception of *Job*: the human and divine spheres are incommensurable and it is the moral tragedy of man that the ultimate significance of his life is forever unavailable to him; in a word, he is doomed to experience life as meaningless.

Nothing could be further from the vision of *Job* than Kafka's despair. Though the human and divine spheres are indeed incommensurable in both Kafka and *Job*, the biblical work, indeed the whole of the Bible, conceives the two spheres as interpenetrable.

Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee.

What a world of difference between *Job* and Kafka's heroes, who hear only the silence of despair and see only the abyss of suffering and vacuity!

If *Job* has learned from hearing things that were too wonderful for him, we must at least learn that we have failed to hear them. Then perhaps the experience of *Job* will become available to us.

<sup>8</sup> [The *Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Harry T. Moore (New York: The Viking Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1962), I, 301. Copyright © 1962 by Angelo Ravagli and C. Montague Weekley, Executors of the Estate of Frieda Lawrence Ravagli. Used by permission of The Viking Press and Laurence Pollinger Limited, London, for the Estate of the late Mrs. Frieda Lawrence—Ed.]

## PART TWO

### *View Points*

#### *Kenneth Rexroth: The Book of Job*

Of all the Hebrew Scriptures, the *Book of Job* is most provocative of meditation. It is concerned with the fundamental confrontation, the ultimate mystery of man's existence, the irreconcilability of absolute and contingent in the natural order. Why does evil exist? Whether God exists or not, there is still the inexplicable waste of value in the world of facts. The law of the conservation of energy may be substantiated by experiment, but there is no demonstrable principle of the conservation of good. From this mystery all the other dilemmas of the moral life depend. What is the meaning of Auschwitz, or the pains and betrayals of the most commonplace life? Was Dostoevsky's character right? "It's all not worth the tears of one child. I respectfully hand Him back my ticket."

This is the subject of the dramatic poem of Job. There is nothing specifically Jewish about it, and an ancient Talmudic tradition says it was written in another language. Job and his friends are not Jews but what we would call Bedouins. Their conflicting wisdoms were learned from the mystery of the desert, the cruelty of nature, the impassivity of the constellations. Like most of the wisdom literature of the *Bible*, the *Book of Job* is the product of an international literary elite, the reflection of the highly developed sensibility and intellectual life of empires that stretched from the Crimea to the Indus and the cataracts of the Nile. Yet, like *The Iliad*, it is a careful reconstruction of a world five hundred or more years gone. Job is a patriarchal herdsman, like Abraham, and there are no ideas in the book that might not have occurred to primitive man as philosopher. The form, a *flyting*, *tenzone*, disputation, is found in all the literatures of the Ancient Near East, as is the subject, the suffering of the just and innocent.

Gregory the Great founded the medieval tradition of treating *Job* as a Christian prophecy and Catholic doctrine and rite. Before him Origen, philosophically more sophisticated, had said that since the being of God is by definition incomprehensible, so necessarily his justice is incomprehensible. This extraordinary *non sequitur* would

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"Classics Revisited: XXVII, *The Book of Job*" by Kenneth Rexroth. Saturday Review (April 23, 1966), p. 21. Copyright © 1966 by Saturday Review, Inc. Reprinted by permission of the author and the Saturday Review.

come down through Duns Scotus to Luther to Kierkegaard, and be secularized in our own day by the Existentialists. In its final atheistic form, it is the philosophic obsession of the mid-twentieth century. We no longer ask if existence has meaning but, "Does meaning exist?"

The evils that afflict Job are purely physical and negative—deprivations, pains, and destructions. In life he never meets with positive, active moral evil, wrong done consciously in full will by person to person. The question debated by Job and his friends is not whether natural disasters are unmerited. They are aware that they do not occur in a context where merit has meaning, unless they emanate from the will of a person. The entire debate assumes that they do, that the Creator is a person with personal knowledge of the consequences, omniscient as well as omnipotent. If the creative principle of the universe is a person, why is not the destruction and waste of good in time just as malevolent as any interpersonal evil? In the dialogue God is called *Shaddai*, the utterly self-sufficient power.

Job's friends are like the liberal clergy of so short a time ago. They believe that creation is demonstrably conservative of good, that justice eventually triumphs, and the good man reaps his reward. They deny evil as such. In one way or other they argue that the evils of the world are really goods, they are privative, educative, disciplinary, deserved, misunderstood, illusory, but never gratuitous, much less malevolent. The poet underlines every speech of the "comforters" with irony like the mounting bass notes of an organ.

Job answers simply, "I have been just and harmless in heart and deed, and I have suffered harm and injustice from the course of events." Finally he swears an oath, he stakes his integrity as a person on his innocence. Then the Almighty answers as a Voice from the Whirlwind. He answers the oath, the commitment, not the arguments. He begins with a rebuke, "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without wisdom?" and ends with another, this one to Eliphaz, "My wrath is kindled against you and your friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right. . . ." The Voice from the Whirlwind says that both Job's defense of himself and his friends' defense of the Almighty are foolishness, but offers no explanation, only simply confrontation, omnipotence to contingency. The speech of the Almighty, one of the very greatest poems in all literature, is a parade of power, devoid of moral content, but intolerably charged with the *tremendum*, the awe and judgment of the utterly other.

There could be no greater tribute to the power of the unknown author than that readers in future ages would seldom interpret this great speech as saying that the creative principle of the universe is not simply "amoral," that comforting dodge, but positively immoral by any human standards. What is the difference between the game

between Jehovah and Satan with their pawn, the soul of Job, and the games the rotted aristocrats play with the innocent in *Les Liaisons Dangeureuses* or the experiments of Dostoevsky's Stavrogin? This is the final question, and in it the friends of Job tumble, lost in an abyss.

The Voice in the Whirlwind is a person speaking to a person, and so, looking back from the point attained by the wisdom of Job, is the Voice on Sinai; the *Torah* is transformed from a legal document to speech, "I am the Lord thy God. . . ." It is remarkable that dialogue in the *Bible* is brief and preemptory and rare—Abraham, Amos, Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah—less than a hundred verses altogether, of command and submission, and even dialogue between man and man is almost as scarce—until we come to Job. Suddenly dialogue is imported from the wisdom literature of the ancient Orient and placed at the center of Jewish religion.

The acceptance of the incomprehensibility of the justice of God is not a rational act, it is an act of prayer, of communion. Job's final words are a prayer of humble access, a voicing of the breakdown of logic and evaluation in an abiding state of calm ecstasy. The *Book of Job* makes sense only as a vehicle for contemplation, for the deepest kind of prayer, which culminates in the assumption of unlimited liability, what the Byzantines and Russians loved to call the divinization of man.

The upholder of the universe takes Job into communion with himself, with the awesomeness of infinite process. Job no longer needs vindication. The word becomes meaningless, a vanished shadow lost in the terrible illumination of a tragic sense of being, beyond the natural and temporal order altogether.

The best way to read *The Book of Job* is in one of the pocket editions of the *King James Version* with William Blake's illustrations—if you are lucky enough to find one. I believe there are none now in print. The best way to study it is in the *Anchor Bible* volume by Marvin Pope.

### Arthur S. Peake: The Art of the Book

There has been much fruitless controversy as to the literary label that should be attached to the book [of Job]. We cannot force this splendid fruit of Hebrew wisdom into a Greek scheme, and it is really futile to discuss whether it is a drama or an epic. It is itself. We may

*From the Introduction by Arthur S. Peake to Job, The Century Bible (Edinburgh: T. C. & E. C. Jack, 1905), "The Art of the Book," pp. 41-45. Used by permission of Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd.*

more profitably linger on some of its literary qualities. Like Hebrew poetry in general its most striking formal characteristic is its parallelism. Usually the second line repeats the thought of the first, though sometimes it states the contrast to it, or perhaps it completes the thought begun but left unfinished in the first. The parallel structure brings to the ear the same kind of satisfaction as rhyme, but unless very skilfully used it is apt to pall in a long poem. In this book its monotony is largely overcome by the poet's blending of various types of parallelism and by the occasional use of triplets instead of couplets.

The poet is a master of metaphors, taken from many spheres of life. The work of the farm suggests a figure to describe those who sow iniquity and reap trouble, or the comparison of death in a ripe old age to the coming into the barn of the shock of corn in its season. The fate of the wicked is likened to that of the stubble driven by the wind from the threshing-floor or the chaff chased by the storm. Job compares himself in his prosperity to a tree drinking up the water by its roots while its branches were refreshed by the dew. His words were awaited by the assembly as thirstily as the parched clods look up for the rain. In the long life he then anticipated he compared himself to the phoenix. He longs for death as the slave panting under the heat longs for the cool evening which will bring him his rest; or again, death is sought with the eagerness that characterizes those who dig for hid treasures. The wicked is compared to the Nile grass suddenly cut off from the moisture and withering rapidly; his trust can as little support him as a flimsy spider's web.

Man's brief life<sup>1</sup> is like the flower opening in beauty and suddenly cut down, the swiftness with which it passes is illustrated by the weaver's shuttle, the courier, the speed of the light skiffs on the river, or of the eagle as it swoops on its prey. The completeness of his disappearance from earth when he passes into Sheol is compared with the vanishing of the cloud. The failure of streams supplies him with several metaphors; thus Job illustrates the disappointment he had experienced from the friends by the caravan that comes to the channel down which the turbid torrent swept in winter, only to find the brawling stream scorched out of existence in the summer heat, and perish in the search for new supplies. The failing waters furnish an apt metaphor for the irretrievable ebbing away of life, while the forgetfulness of past trouble is illustrated by the oblivion into which they run. Military figures are common. More than once Job describes God as an archer with Job for His target. He tortures him with suspense, letting His arrows whistle about him, before He sends them home. Or He is a wrestler of gigantic strength with Job for His antagonist and

<sup>1</sup> [Here, and elsewhere, very long paragraphs have been broken up—Ed.]

victim. A third illustration is that of a fortress with a breach made in the walls through which the enemy pours.

The fate of the wicked is set forth under the figure of an attack on a den of lions; the old lions have their teeth dashed out and perish for lack of prey, while the whelps are scattered abroad. There are many other metaphors for the evil destiny that awaits the godless. His branch is not green, or it is dried up by the flame, or again his root is withered beneath, and his branch cut off above; he is like the vine that fails to bring to maturity its unripe grape, or the olive shedding its flowers. His path is all beset with snares, the hell-hounds of terror chase him, but whichever way he turns they meet him, closing on him from every side. While he flees from the iron weapon the brass bow pierces him with its arrow. He is driven away as utterly as a dream of the night. While wickedness is a dainty tit-bit in the sinner's mouth, held fast that all its delicious sweetness may be enjoyed, and only reluctantly let go, yet it will turn to the gall of asps within him.

Natural phenomena are described by graphic images. Clouds formed the garment and swaddling band for the infant sea, new born from the bowels of the chaotic deep. The clouds as they float in the sky are like bottles filled with water, which when they are tilted spill the rain. The dawn is a woman peeping over the crest of the hills, and the rays of light are her eyelashes. Darkness is a coverlet in which the wicked are shrouded from sight; suddenly the light comes and twitches the covering away so that the wicked are shaken out of it and stand revealed in the glare of day. And under the light the world lies all clear cut like clay freshly stamped by the seal, or like a body clothed with its close-fitting robe. The caracole of the horse is compared to the leaping of a locust.

The book is studded with the most exquisite descriptions. The whole of Yahweh's speech is a sustained effort of the highest genius, unsurpassed in the world's literature. The animal pictures are like instantaneous photographs, catching a characteristic attitude, and fixing it for us in the most vivid words. And with what power and beauty are the marvels of the universe set forth! The laying of its foundation amid the songs of the morning stars and the joyous shouts of the sons of God; the birth of the sea, and the staying of its tumultuous heavenward leap; the punctual dayspring, flooding the world with light; the springs that feed the sea from the nether deep; the gates of Sheol; the dwelling of light and darkness; the stores of hail and snow made ready for God's battles; the sluice cut through the firmament by which the torrential rain descends; the frost that turns the streams to stone; the rain that falls on the waste afar from man; the mighty constellations, obedient to God's behest; the lightning with its purposeful movement; all pass before the mind as God unrolls the panorama of the universe.

And fully worthy to be mentioned with this is the wonderful description in Bildad's third speech, closing with the awed confession that we stand but at the outskirts of God's ways, where the deafening thunder of His power is mercifully heard from afar. Less noteworthy than these is the fine description of God's power and wisdom in ix. 5-10.

Or take the vision of Eliphaz, where the old terror masters him as he narrates it. How vividly it all passes before us; the preparation in the musings on his night trances; the fear that sets his bones quaking, the cold breath across the face, the hair on end, the vague thing that his straining eyes could resolve into no shape he could name, the dead silence and then the thin voice. Or, for its quiet soothing beauty, the peroration to the same speech. And what a sense of peace steals over the weary as he reads the longing words in which Job describes the untroubled calm of Sheol, where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. How full of dismay and yearning is the plaintive assertion of the hopelessness of man's fate (xix. 7-21)! How graphic Bildad's picture of the terrors that surround the sinner and the evil destiny to which he is doomed!

The poet's power of irony is displayed most conspicuously in the speech of Yahweh. But examples may be culled from the debate. Thus Job bitterly asks God what is frail man that He must so narrowly observe him, or whether he is himself a sea or sea-monster that God should set a watch over him. The friends' arguments he satirizes with pungent scorn, their proverbs are proverbs of ashes, their wisdom consists only of platitudes; he tells Bildad that he really must have been inspired to make one of his speeches. One of his most biting and delightful phrases is aimed at them, "How irritating are words of uprightness." Bitter indeed is the question whether he had taxed their friendship by asking them to do anything for him, as if he had thought friendship could stand such a test!

His pathos is deeply moving. Job feels acutely the unkindness of his friends, he even turns to them with the appeal, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends!" But it is little that he says to the friends in this strain. It is rather to God that his pathetic pleadings are addressed. "My friends scorn me, But mine eye poureth out tears unto God." With such care had God fashioned him, with such kindness preserved him, why does He wantonly destroy him? Soon he must die under God's stroke, but by and by God's present mood will pass, then He will seek for His servant in love, but alas! too late. Especially the swift movement to death elicits some of Job's most touching words, and the thought of the dreary interminable darkness that awaits him.

The character-drawing of the book is not highly developed. The friends are distinguished to some extent, but they have no very clearly-marked individuality, and they take very much the same line. The

character-study of Job is more subtle, as the interest of the poem centers about the struggle of his soul caught in the web of mystery and pain. On this, however, it is not necessary to repeat what is said elsewhere.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> [Earlier in his Introduction—Ed.]

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